THE TRAGICAL SATIRES OF JOHN WEBSTER AND CYRIL TOURNEUR

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This is to certify that Mr. Mukesh Kumar Sharma has completed his Ph.D. thesis entitled **"The Tragical Satires of John Webster and Cyril Tourneur"** under my supervision. To the best of my knowledge the research work is satisfactory and original.

Professor K.S. Misra

[Supervisor]

C O N T E N T S

P R E F A C E

The plays of Jacobean tragic dramatists in general, and those of Webster and Tourneur in particular, have been a matter of varied controversies among critics up to the end of the nineteenth century. These plays have been described as chaotic in technique as well as vision. Two aspects have been a matter of critical contention by the neo-classical as well as romantic critics. They are characterization and a confused piecing together a variety of dramatic conventions and devices. Critics have quite often complained against the lack of psychological profundity in characterization, confused and unconvincing motivations propelling the actions of the dramatic personae, structural looseness and a rather gloomy vision of life which tends to border on pessimism. The main cause of the critical regret has been that both Webster and Tourneur wrote plays which are full of sufferings, bloodshed and death but they neither produce the proper tragic emotions in the audience nor do they bring the characteristic effect of a tragedy which is calm of mind all passion spent. The 'tragic' characters choose and suffer but are deliberately denied tragic perception.

The present study aims at exploring the nature of the 'tragic' plays written by Webster and Tourneur to establish that their plays need a separate sub-generic nomenclature to

assign to them an independent category. This sub-genre can be called 'tragical satire' which does not mean tragedy with satirical elements but a play which has its own characteristic dramaturgy. We do not yet have an adequately worked out poetics of tragical satire which can account for the dramaturgy of the plays of sufferings and deaths like those of Webster and Tourneur.

The study comprises six chapters. The first chapter, Introduction, contains details about the milieu which the two dramatists used for the source material for their plays. It also deals with the studies already carried on in regard to the plays which we have analysed. A tentative theory of tragical satire, deductively drawn from the plays under study, has been given, which has been used in the subsequent chapters as a critical reference. Chapters II to V contain detailed analyses of two plays each by Webster and Tourneur. The last chapter is a ricapitulation of the major points emerging from the discussion of the plays. Only those plays of Webster and Tourneur have been analysed where there are no controversies about collaborators so that the two dramatists' unique place in the field of tragical satire is established with a reasonable degree of certainty.

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CHAPTER - I

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Towards the end of the sixteenth century when Shakespeare was writing his last plays, a new perception of life had already started troubling the minds of the creative writers. For this the milieu in which the artist lived contributed significantly. Creative writers, especially dramatists, showed an increasing interest in the exploration of the nature of evil, not only innate in man, but as a consequence of the social, cultural, and moral devaluations of the society in which they lived. The exploration in man's innate depravity was based on the assumption of the Manichean philosophy that man was as angelic as he was Satanic. This found support in the concept of macrocosm which was a result of the combination of light and darkness. This is further supported by the belief that the Fall of Man was a result of the joint activities of God and Satan. Since in the Elizabethan dramatic world man is envisioned as microcosmic, he is logically constituted of divine and evil attributes. Certain writers, like Shakespeare in his romantic comedies, might emphasize the positive aspects of man's being while other writers, like Webster have focused on the darker aspect. Generally an ironist with satiric intentions takes up the baser aspects of man's personality for treatment. The example of such writers whose plays have

been analysed in the present study are mainly Webster and Tourneur. In fact, much before these dramatists, ironic detachment, in a subtly ambivalent manner, is noticeable in Marlowe's tragedies and explicitly treated in Ben Jonson's sataric comedies.

After perusing Shakespeare's tragedies where there is a synthetic vision of the positive and the negative or the divine and evil, one wonders why Webster and Tourneur, writing in the same social and cultural milieu, though with a changed political perspective, wrote the type of plays which are full of sufferings, intrigues, bloodshed and death, but where the tragic characters do not evoke the right tragic emotions of pity, fear and admiration. These emotions remain ambivalent and the audience's response remains uncertain and ambiguous, which recalls the technique of 'alienation' explicitly stated and used by Bertolt Brecht after about three and a half centuries. This is not to say that the Brechtian 'alienation' is used by either the Elizabethans or the Jacobeans as a conscious dramatic technique but the effect on the audience of a Brechtian play and that of a Jacobean is quite similar as far as the dramatist's careful manipulation of the audience's ambivalent empathy is concerned. This point needs some elaboration

in order to make our stand clear as well as to justify the investigation undertaken in the present study.

We can begin with Marlowe's treatment of evil. He presents evil in such an exhilarating manner that we feel drawn towards his protagonists who always try to overreach themselves. Dr. Faustus's extravaganza of the heroic powers of evil, for example, are so exhilarating that we feel almost swept away by the sheer force of the current of the rhetoric of the protagonists. His Tamburlaine swells into such a Titanic figure that we feel inclined to admire him for his superhuman prowess and potential. The same thing we find, though in a lower key, in the Young Mortimer in Edward II, Barabas in The Jew of Malta, and the Guise in the Massacre at Paris. Both the mental and intellectual accomplishments of Marlovian heroes are presented in terms of superhuman proportions which threaten to compare with divine omnipotence. Tamburlaine's ordering his army to attack the firmament and pull down Jupiter is a classic example of the Marlovian conception of the superhuman potential of his protagonists. But Marlowe's ironic vision runs through his entire dramatic career. He has manipulated this by the use of the central metaphors of such mythical figures as Icarus, Phaeton, and the medieval concept of the Fall of Pride and the turning of the wheel of Fate. We find that Marlowe's heroes, inspite of their struggle, suffering, intermittent

victories, and eventual defeats, do not elicit tragic emotions from the audience. But the heroes are denied perception of any higher reality or truth where they could show an awareness that they have realized their mistakes. We find that this realization is too feeble to arouse our sympathy for them. Even Shakespeare's Satanic protagonist, Macbeth, realizes his mistake and perceives a higher truth which enables him to welcome death half-way. But whereas in Shakespeare's tragic protagonists the perception does not have any ambivalence or false note, in Marlovian tragic protagonists realization of higher truth is rather ambivalent and does not contribute to the raising of their stature. In other words, they fail to transcend their personal selves to become larger than life.

The Marlovian pattern is broadly discernible in the plays of Webster and Tourneur. It will create a confusion if we use the term 'tragedy' for the plays of Marlowe, Webster, and Tourneur, as we use it for those of Shakespeare. Hence the use of the term tragical satire has been preferred. In the following paragraphs we propose to define the term with reference to its broad characteristics which are deductively drawn from our study of the 'tragedies' of the Jacobeans.

For a tragical satire the most important aspect is

the milieu on which the dramatist directly draws for his source material. The second important aspect is the dramatist's attitude to this milieu. The third factor which must draw our attention is the dramatist's manipulation of the various dramaturgical elements in order to convey his attitude. And finally the emergent vision is a deliberate fusion of the affirmative and negative views of life where the gloom is not completely diffused. Let us elaborate these points to have a theoretical construct for our study.

Both Webster and Tourneur drew upon the ethos, conventions, and ideas characterising the world of their time. It is well known to the students of history that after a prolonged spate of civil strife it was Queen Elizabeth who provided a sense of security and stability to the English people. Prosperity returned to England gradually but steadily in all walks of life. England was making strides in the independent fields of trade and commerce with the discoveries and adventurous voyages of the newly awakened explorers. The glorious victory over the hitherto invincible Spanish Armada brought added confidence to the minds of the English people and bred in them a growing sense of national pride. In the literary and academic fields enthusiastic and creative authors produced works which celebrated the glorious processes of life, and

eulogised the vital and vigorous incidents of the past. At the same time the revival of classical learning and the Renaissance humanistic thinking also contributed substantially to man's newly acquired faith in his individualism and being created in the image of God. Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Dr. Faustus, Young Mortimer and the Guise are some of the well-known figures of high-soaring aspirations. These superhuman aspirants in the pride of their semi-divine potentialities, wilfully tried to deny the limitations which man is subject to. They try to overreach their congenital circumscription. The result is a steep fall following their vertical ascent. It appears that writers like Marlowe were sending out signals and warning to the Elizabethans who were gloating over the humanistic individualism because of which man was envisioned as having infinite potential. Marlowe's message is not a denial of man's inherent potential to reach extraordinary heights but a sagacious advice that man is great, no doubt, but at the same time he is little, too. This naturally produced a sense of despair in sensitive minds.

With the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the new era, this mood of despair was reinforced by the revival of the sense of uncertainty and instability brought by James I. In fact this sense of uncertainty was subterraneously present during the latter half of Elizabeth's reign when people's minds must have been

agitated at the prospect of the revival of the older days of strife for the occupation of the throne, because the Queen did not marry to leave a legitimate inheritor of her throne. Political intrigues, conspiracies, and other fissiperous tendencies which were covered by the facade of external prosperity, calm, and nationalism, threatened all along to come on the surface. The accession of James I only hastened this process. Though his accession was without any bloodshed, it was not maintained for a long time. The luxurious activities at the court, lowering of standards, slackness in discipline, loss of dignity, and extravagant expenditure of the Royal family soon brought the earlier (pre-Elizabethan) uncertainty in the minds of the Jacobean people. The various intrigues, like the open rebellion of the Earl of Essex, and the Gun Powder Plot (1605) aimed at blowing up the parliament and James himself, were a pointer to the direction in which the English society and polity were going to shape.

Before the turn of the century the English poets had maintained a balance between court and country, civilization and nature, and art and feeling. But with the turn of the century this balanced interaction was broken. It was being excluded from the dramatic works; the dramatic scene was confined to the corrupt Danish Court of Hamlet,

the French Court of Bussy, the Italian Court of Sejanus, and the Roman Court as presented in the plays of both Webster and Tourneur. The life at Court was full of self-seeking and vying for power, and preferment.[1] The court was the place, the corridors of which led man to the extremes of his own being, to murder, madness, dream, violent sexuality, terror, death, torture, and to the mirror of his own self. "In the Italian Palace the most humane impulses took their perverse forms. The Faustian dream of learning became the pedantry of the scholar who studied himself nearly blind to determine how many knots there were on Hercules's club, the shape of the Caesar's nose and whether Hector had a toothache."[2] Medicine was used as a mad doctor beats his mad patient with urinals filled with rosewater. Religion became a melancholy Cardinal denouncing his sister, whom he is trying to murder for never having had her children christened. Morality was reduced to sententiae, the mere form of moral discourse memorized by children and pronounced without conviction on any approximate occasion. Service became pandering, law the tool of power, beauty the cosmetics covering ugliness, government the cynical exercise of the will of the ruler, and politics the employment of policy and Machiavellian

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1. J. Leeds Barroll, & A. Leggatt, The Revels History of Drama in English, Vol.III. 1576-1613 (Methuen & Co., London, 1975), pp.385-88.
2. Ibid.

intrigue.[3] John Marston saw this world and man as corrupt and beastly. For Chapman "Nature no longer moved towards any sensible end, but worked blindly and randomly, an enormous process of wastages."[4] Naturally the dramatic works of this period quite often reflect all these things in abundance. The comic plays concentrate upon the manners, habits and morals of man as social and non-spiritual animal, while the serious plays become satiric, revealing a world order of evil power - bewildered and confused.[5]

A certain kind of development is noticed in the second phase of the Elizabethan drama. It was not the development of the playwright's personal vision, but his grappling with social, economic, and moral issues. "Shakespeare's progress from Romeo and Juliet to King Lear was not a personal development but a development of the system."[6] The literary man reacted to this routine of the system and shaped it in his work. Moreover, the target of the playwrights of the day was not entirely against the system but against the individuals also who were helping to shape it.

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3. Ibid.
4. For a fuller description see Bussy D'Ambois, V.II.
5. See Ellis-Fermor, The Jacobean Drama (Methuen & Co. London, 1969), p.4.
6. L.C. Knights, Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson (Chatto and Windus, Harmondsworth, 1937), p.172.

Theatrical activities were much affected by the religious controversy between the Puritans and the Roman Catholics. The theatres were the haunts of the courtier because the majority of the society which was in favour of the Puritans and against the King, stopped visiting playhouses saying that "the cause of plagues was sin, if you look to it well; and the cause of sin are plays: therefore the cause of plagues are the plays."[7] These courtiers were more interested in exciting entertainments at the court than anything else. They desired the same in the theatres. As the dramatist had to please the audience, he kept them "stimulated by a continual series of thrilling events, particularly at stress-positions within the play."[8]

In addition to the above abnormalities the period is distinctly marked with a certain kind of discontent which gave rise to a melancholy behaviour. Almost all the classes and systems operating in the society were affected by it. It spread over the literary scene and was visible in the sermons, letters, and pamphlets of the day. The court, the university, the administration and the private sectors, too, were under its grip. In fact this melancholic tone was partly exaggerated by the contemporary critics, but chiefly

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7. F.P. Wilson, Elizabethan and Jacobean (Oxford Univ. Press, London, 1945), p.8.
8. J.W. Lever, The Tragedy of State (Methuen & Co., London, 1971), p.2.

the pervading atmosphere of misery and discontent because of the prevailing attitude towards death and the social and economic life of the period, is the main factor which gave rise to its wide spread popularity. Secondly, psychology was very popular among certain groups of people according to which to study a man properly was neither scientific nor systematic. A deep and true study of psychology was based on the theory of humours according to which the different characteristics of men were attributed to the different combinations of blood, phlegm, choler, and melancholy. Obsession with death was another factor that contributed to the wide-spread sense of melancholy. John Donne and Ben Jonson themselves were among the plague-affected people who had suffered a great loss of family lives. Certainly the element of melancholy was a product of the society and as the dramatists drew on their society for material for their plays, they presented in their works a number of melancholy characters.

Despair, excitement, or exultation, resulting from the portrayal of a milieu, depends upon the writer's attitude to the material he is working upon. This attitude determines the writer's vision of life in a particular work of art. For example, a writer's attitude may be one of indulgence, tolerance, and forgiving acceptance. Such an

attitude will either ignore human foibles and the degradation of social values or will attenuate them to such an extent that the sharpness of their edges will be blunted. In Shakespeare's romantic comedies, for example, we do have glimpses of evil in human nature as well as society but they are treated with such indulgence and are so overshadowed by the brighter side of life that we tend to accept them. Contrasted with Shakespeare's treatment of evil in his comedies is Ben Jonson's treatment of the various forms of evil in his comedies. While in Shakespeare's case we are indulgent, in Ben Jonson's case we respond to the world of evil with comic distance and ironic detachment. The distinctive measure of difference between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson in this regard is that while Ben Jonson is explicitly satirical, Shakespeare is subtly indulgent with a pinch of irony. The writer's attitude in a tragedy stands on a different footing altogether. He may present an exploration of evil and suffering with an impersonal and dispassionate attitude without being partial to either good or evil, something in the nature of Keats's negative capability. Shakespeare is an example of this especially when, in his tragedies, the plot elements do not directly relate to the immediate society. Hence satire is, if any, indirect, subtle, and fused with the longer human issues. But a dramatist may approach his material in a tragedy where

the topical immediacy of material is paramount and explicit. His purpose may be clinically diagnostic where he wants to expose the social evils in unreserved terms. He may do this by a complete withdrawl of authorial sympathy and with ironic detachment. In such a situation darkness overshadows brightness and the element of gloom and despair becomes a strongly felt dramatic experience. Webster and Tourneur belong to this category of writers.

Because of the above mentioned artistic attitude of the dramatist, dramaturgical elements, like plot, characterization, and dramatic devices, are moulded differently from those of proper tragedy. By the term 'proper tragedy' we mean two things : one is a systematically developed plot-line with either a main story only or alongwith a sub-plot as well. Such plot-lines follow the Aristotelian cause and effect pattern of development when the motivations of characters are not ambiguous. The pattern is normally one of exposition, complication, catastrophe, and denouement. The tragic characters follow the pattern of choice, action (leading to suffering) and perception. The play eventually ends at a note of resolution, reconciliation, and acceptance, and the dramatic experience which we get is what Milton calls in his Samson Agonistes "calm of mind all passion spent." The

element of universality and the experience of Longinean transport reuslt from the tragic portagonists' struggle which starts at the personal level but eventually grows into a larger concern which transcends into the domain of an exploration into the meaning of life in the perception of a higher truth. Ancient Greek and Shakespearean tragedies follow this pattern. But there are dramatists, like Webster, Tourneur, Middleton, and Ford who my not be interested in the deeper issues of human existence as such but in the various manifestations of evil and its modus-operandi. When focus on the various lights and shades of evil becomes the primary dramatic concern, the clearly developed plot-line suffers a set-back sometimes. This is because it becomes necessary for a dramatist to induct into the broader-framework of a play certain events, situations, and interactional encounters. This naturally brings in a looseness in the structural fabric of the play. The plays of Webster and Tourneur are full of such elements. Another dramaturgical element which is remoulded in a tragical-satire is characterization. Rounded characters, developed convincingly, are very often reshaped into static ones. Because of the primacy of portraying the various facets of evil and the modes of its operation, the elements of causal motivation in characterization become ambiguous. The dramatist's reduced reliance upon tightly constructed plot

structure and convincingly developed characters through the pattern of choice, action, and perception and the final vision which a suffering character is allowed, remains devoid of the element of higher truth. The dramatist increasingly relies upon a variety of dramatic conventions, such as chorus, commentator, pantomime, pageants and the use of anecdotes etc. The dramatic experience that we derive is thus short of an affirmative view of life. The pervasive gloom is not completely diffused towards the end of the play.

Webster and Tourneur have written plays which belong to the category whose main dramaturgical characteristics have been mentioned above. They were not accorded the recognition they deserved for over hundred years until Lamb and Swinburne showed some a perfunctory interest in them. Certain writers, like Dryden and Dr. Johnson in their preoccupation with Shakespeare, paid at most a lukewarm interest in Webster and Tourneur. The neo-classical critics, obsessed as they were with the observance of the strict rules of drama, with emphasis on the purity of the dramatic form, naturally did not find the plays of Webster and Tourneur as viable examples to illustrate their critical tenets. As pointed out earlier Webster and Tourneur wrote a hybrid form of tragedy which made use of diverse dramatic forms, conventions, and devices. Hence they resisted

conformity with every hitherto established dramatic convention. As referred to earlier critics found it difficult to explain the structural strategies adopted by these dramatists, because their plays were full of sufferings, bloodshed, and murder, alongwith theatrical sensationalism and horror, but the audience's response was not quite the same as a typical Shakespearean tragedy produces. Hence their plays were perhaps ignored because they were considered dramaturgically deficient.

With the revival of interest in seventeenth century poetry in our own age the Jacobean dramatists have also received considerable critical attention. But majority of the studies on the two dramatists under consideration, concentrate on the stylistic elements, imagery, and the complex dramatic experience. The eighteenth century almost ignored Webster simply because, "in an age whose art was characterized by a civilized restraint in the handling of emotion and a preoccupation with decorum - the subordination of every detail to the whole - in matters of style, a dramatist who favoured an apparently piecemeal method of writing and excelled in scenes of stark mental and physical anguish was not likely to please."[9] During the nineteenth century Webster's plays drew critical attention from a number of critics, particularly through Charles Lamb's

9. R.V.Holdsworth, ed., Webster: The White Devil and The Duchess of Malfi (Macmillan, London, 1975), p.14.

Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets (1808). In this book Lamb studied the Elizabethans with Webster as poets and not as playwrights. Other critics like Stendhal, and H.M. (John Wilson) have criticized Webster in respect of the structure of his plays. The latter in his 'Analytical Essays on the Early English Dramatists' called Webster as an expert of scenes rather than of structure.[10] His judgement on The White Devil is characteristic of his critical attitude to Webster as a dramatist:

> This play is so disjointed in its action: the incidents are so capricious and so involved and there is throughout such a mixture of the horrible and the absurd - the comic and the tragic, the pathetic and the ludicrous that we find it impossible within our narrow limits to give anything like a complete and consistent analysis of it.[11]

During the latter half of the nineteenth century Webster criticism can be summarized with reference to two groups of writers. The critics of the first group, like Lamb and Swinburne, concentrated on the 'poetic power of Webster's tragic vision', while the members of the other group, like Archer and Poel, concentrated on the structure, absurd improbabilities, and gross excesses in his writings. Most of these critics

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10. G.K. and S.K. Hunter, eds., John Webster (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1969), pp.44-45.
11. Quoted by R.V. Holdsworth in Webster, p.34.

celebrated Webster as a great explorer of the human soul and the mystery of the world's inequity. To Lamb and Swinburne, Webster "seemed, at his best, almost Shakespeare's equal; and yet by other minds, themselves not contemptible, he has been judged, degraded as a man and futile as an artist."[12] Rupert Brooke assesses Wesbster thus : "Though the popular conception of Webster is rather one of immense gloom and perpetual preoccupation with death, his power lies almost more in the intense, sometimes horrible, vigour of some of his scenes and his uncanny probing into the depths of the heart."[13] On the other hand some of the theatrical critics had been satisfied only with finding faults in the structure of Webster's plays. Among these William Archer is the most significant. He would accept a play as good drama only when it, "obeyed .... rational canons of dramatic construction" and which had "believable characters acting in coherently motivated ways .... step by step towards rationally developed conclusion."[14] Here is Archer's bitter observation on a twentieth century performance of The Duchess of Malfi : "The privilege of listening to its occasional beauties of diction was felt to be dearly bought

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12. F.L. Lucas, The Complete Works of John Webster (Chatto and Windus, London, 1927), V, p.16.
13. John Webster and The Elizabethan Drama (Russell and Russel, New York, 1967), p.123.
14. See G.K. and S.K. Hunter, 'Introduction' to John Webster, pp. 49-50.

at the price of enduring three hours of coarse and sanguinary melo-drama."[15]

Another dimension of Webster scholarship has been the moral criticism of his plays. The last quarter of the nineteenth century shows a revival of interest in the earlier dramatists, because they appealed to their new perspective of life in the wake of anti-Victorianism. Many twentieth century critics were primarily concerned with the moral criticism of Webster. Charles Kingsley, Ian Jack, W.D. Boklund, and Robert Ornstein are some of the critics in this regard. Kingsley dismissed Webster's plays and similar plays by other Elizabethans as "licentious drama."[16] In fact, the same was originally expressed by the puritans. Ian Jack (1949) observes, "the extraneous background of moral doctrine" in The White Devil has no relation with the rest of the play. According to W.D. Boklund the world of The White Devil is "totally immoral." In his The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy (1960), Robert Ornstein examines and asserts that the moral lessons of the two plays of Webster are inadequate. In the same way it is pertinent to recall Irving Ribner who observes that "Webster's plays are an

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15. The Nineteenth Century, Vol.87, No.515 (Jan., 1920), pp. 126-132.

16. 'The Case of John Webster', Scrutiny, Vol. XVI (March, 1949), pp. 38-39.

agonized search for moral order in the uncertain and chaotic world of Jacobean scepticism by a dramatist who can no longer accept without question the postulates of order and degree so dear to the Elizabethans."[17]

Another set of writers have concerned themselves with analysing Webster's plays to assign them to generic categories. Here the names of E.E. Stoll and T.S. Eliot can be mentioned. Eliot has observed that the main cause of the failure of the Elizabethans in general and Webster's The Duchess of Malfi in particular, during the early seventeenth century was "their inherent weakness than to the fitness of modern actors to represent their virtues."[18] Yet there are critics like Clifford Leech who are concerned with structural devices of Webster's plays which result from the "sententiae." The charge against sententiae is that they bear no relation to the rest of the play. Leech asserts that the sententiae "are not separated from the action or used for the purpose of relief; they come in death scenes in the final utterance of major characters. The result is an effect of distancing when immediacy would be better."[19]

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17. Jacobean Tragedy (Methuen & Co., London,1962), p.97.
18. Selected Essays (Fabre and Fabre, London,1932), p.110.
19. See G.K. and S.K. Hunter, John Webster, p. 103.

Other critics also concentrate on the same aspects as outlined above. T.B. Tomlinson, D.L. Frost, G.O.Mac Donald assert that no new insight is possible in Webster study. Wilson Knight's "spatial criticism" has been very popular with Shakespeare's plays; it has also been applied to Webster's plays. In this connection it was Ellis Fermor who unsuccessfully attempted to explain Webster's imagery. In fact the function of imagery in Webster has variously been traced by critics like, Moody E.Prior, and C.W. Davis, but Hereward T. Price has adopted it on a fuller scale.[20] The overall view of these critics may be summarized like this : "Webster's structures are too deliberate, too intellectual, too much a mosaic made out of his own reading, to be properly susceptible of 'Spatial analysis'".[21] In fact, as it has been rightly observed, no single approach can be applied to fully analyze Webster's plays. T.S. Eliot remarks : "in his greatest tragedies Webster has a kind of pity for all his characters, an attitude to good and bad alike which helps to unify his pattern."[22]

Bogard compares Webster with Shakespeare in terms of a satiric counterpoint to the tragic action: "If Shakespeare's

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20. PMLA, Pt.2, Vol. 70 (1955), pp. 717-739.
21. See G.K. and S.K. Hunter, John Webster, p.107.
22. Ibid., p. 108.

tragedy be conceived as a vortex - centering the moral universe in the suffering soul of an individual; Webster's may be likened to a framed general action like a stage panorama which makes its most significant revelations through the presentation of man's relation to man."[23]

Like Webster, Tourneur's fame in the literary history rests mainly on his two great plays - The Revenger's Tragedy, and The Atheist's Tragedy. He, like the other Jacobean playwrights, was relegated into oblivion for a long time and his fame is a sort of a gift of nineteenth century romantic critics. As a satirist, Tourneur is not superior to Marston but had a "real gift for invective, and while exhibiting beastly figures in the perpetration of ill - motived atrocities, he was able to shroud his stage in the miasma of the bitter world-weariness which was one of the symptoms of the Jacobean reactions."[24] Though The Atheist's Tragedy has its own merits, and occupies a distinct position in the history of drama, Tourneur's fame, because of his greater artistic achievement rests upon his earlier play The Revenger's Tragedy. In these two plays Tourneur's merits "lay in his ability to evoke a poetic vision of a world so corrupt and vitiated by evil as to leave no hope for humanity."[25] Swinburne identifies Tourneur as the poet of

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23. Ibid., p.39.

24. Albert C. Baugh, A Literary History of England (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1977), p.566.

25. Irving Ribner, 'Introduction' to The Atheist's Tragedy, p. XXXIII.

such moral fervor that he could regard the world of his plays only with a savage indignation expressing itself in sublime poetry.[26] Tourneur's amorality so much haunted T.S. Eliot that he could not but comment: "The Revenger's Tragedy achieves its amazing unity by its ability to express an intense and unique horrible vision of life; but it is such a vision as might come as the result of a few or slender - experiences to a highly sensitive adolscent with a gift for words."[27]

Many a critic who have regarded Tourneur's plays as most deficient in moral vision are those who do not see them in terms of the long tradition of medieval homilitic hortatory literature. William Archer considers Tourneur's plays as "the work of a sanguinary maniac who cannot even write tolerable verse."[28] Tourneur's moral inadequacy has been confirmed by J.A. Bastiaenan as follows :

> Tourneur also does not think much of religion. A more materialistic way of rejecting all expectation of a life to come in favour of a restful epicurean career than occurs at the beginning of The Atheist's Tragedy, it would be difficult to conceive. The free and easy manner

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26. Ibid., p.146.
27. Selected Essays 1917-1932 (Fabre and Fabre, London, 1932), p. 189.
28. The Old Drama and the New (Macmillan ,London,1923),p. 73.

> in which man is lowered to the level of the beast is repulsive. However, it should not be forgotten that the persons concerned are utter scoundrels."[29]

The same critic further observes that "an estimate of Tourneur's moral purpose which is that whatever moral purpose the author may have had in view, when depicting characters of this description, perversity like this ought not to have been brought on the stage."[30] In continuation with the moral criticism of Tourneur, Irving Ribner observes, "Tourneur's is the pessimistic christianity inherent in a large segment of medieval thought, implicit in Augustine and Aquinas, which had its most characteristic expression in the De Contemptu Mundi; Tourneur's emphasis is upon the baseness and corruption of man as the inheritor of original sin. He stresses man's smallness in the universe, his slavery to the ravages of time, and hence his need to look to the other world as his only hope of felicity."[31] The studies on Tourneur can generally be categorized under such sections as lack of moral vision; lack of hope, fascination with evil; style and Imagery; and the structure of his plays.[32]

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29. The Moral Tone of Jacobean and Caroline Drama (Macmillan, Amsterdum, 1930), p.177.
30. Ibid., p.82.
31. "An Approach to Tourneur's Imagery," MLR, LIV (1959), pp. 489-498.
32. T.B.Tomlinson, "The Morality of Revenge: Tourneur's Critics," EIC, VI (1956), pp. 482-485.

The above sketchy survey of the critical response to Webster's and Tourneur's plays shows that their plays have been approached from the points of view of moral criticism, structural weakness, and confused blending of the genres of tragedy and satire. In recent times adequate attention has been paid to the study and analysis of the various stylistic devices such as imagery, symbols, and syntactic manipulations. By and large, critics have regretted that both Webster and Tourneur represent a rather gloomy picture of life with inadequate psychological probing in regard to characterization.

Tragical satire as an established genre or sub-genre which can be adopted as a standard model for the examination of a particular play, has not yet been adequately defined. It can better be understood with reference to its contrast with proper tragedies like those of the ancient Greek masters or Shakespeare. The fundamental difference immediately noticeable between proper tragedy and tragical satire is that the former delves much deeper into the problems of human suffering than the latter. The sources of human suffering in a proper tragedy are not so much the evils in the society as the deeper realities of human psyche or in a higher, cosmic, divine or moral dimension of reality. In a tragical satire the immediate sources of

depravities in the individuals are primarily social. Social norms and practices control and guide human behaviour whereas in tragedies the sources are more intangible, such as the forces of the psyche or of higher reality represented by Até, Fate, or the moral order of the universe. However, the individual's responsibility remains an important ingredient in both the forms. But the humans as agents of suffering and disintegration are more prominent in tragical satire in which the role of the higher reality-Fate or moral order of the universe - is reduced to a marginal or peripheral level. The chaos and destruction created in the world of a tragical satire is mostly man-made. But the tragic situation in a proper tragedy is of a more universal nature where man-made predicament is corroborated by some superior force working invisibly, such as Até in Greek tragedies, Fate and moral order of the universe in Elizabethan tragedies, and chance in Hardy's novels. These are forces which man fails to comprehend and overcome. Hence the profundity and mystery of human life become affirmed in a tragedy where the existence of a higher controlling and insurmountable force is asserted. But in a tragical satire God or any equivalent force is almost withdrawn which makes the vision of life relatively narrowed. In other words proper tragedy concentrates on the mystery of human existence. Tragical satire remains concerned mostly

with the observed reality of life. The sense of mystery, wonder, and inexplicableness of human predicament remains the hall-mark of tragedy while a tragical satire quite often deals with explainable factors responsible for producing the state of evil in the individual or the society. Finally, inspite of suffering, destruction, and death, tragical satire lacks the intensity of exploration into the nature of evil because of its elements of ironic detachment and satirical lashing.

Tragical satire is a tragedy of suffering, evil, and horror, wherein the sense of perception, an important aspect of a proper tragedy, is either missing or considerably reduced. Depravity, greed, ambition, malice, and stupidity are the guiding dieties in a tragical satire. Nevertheless, certain amount of grandeur is added to these. Here the emphasis is on the destructive ugliness and power of vice, and good is presented but in a precarious form.

In the world of a tragical satire stress is on the lowly and the mundane wherein the spiritual or the beautiful is in danger of being destroyed under the sheer weight of vice. The opposition of the good and the vice may be in the society or within the individual himself. The world of a tragical satire is more perilous and uncertain than that of a pure or formal satire. It presents greed,lust, vice, hate etc., cast in a heroic mould

to which the stakes are life, throne, power, etc. The tragic persona persists in his depravity and outrage and though he has tragic perceptions and is offered chances of redemption but he rejects them. For example, Tamburlaine's perception at the end of his career is that he failed to conquer the territories he had wanted to. The Young Mortimer only perceives that his machiavellian machinations would take him no further and hence he is forced to accept his doom. Similar is the perception of Barabas, the Jew, who only realizes that his tricks have, contrary to his plan, trapped him fatally. Dr. Faustus, instead of accepting the inevitable, cowers and shrieks. All the heroism and stature of the Marlovian protagonists crumble down and the heroes are defeated in literal terms whereas Shakespeare's tragic protagonists achieve a glorious victory through their perception of truth and a higher vision of life. Even the most Satanic of Shakespeare's tragic protagonists, Macbeth, attains to this spiritual elevation. But as we will see the characters of Webster and Tourneur are more in line with the Marlovian protagonists than the Shakespearean.

The plot of a tragical satire is usually open-ended. Paradoxically it ends nearly where it begins. It is because the suffering individuals remain tied down to the "blood and mire" and complexities of lowly life. If the dramatists, like the

tragic dramatist, were interested in the resolution of the conflicts of evil, the structure of a tragical satire would have followed the pattern of resolution of a proper tragedy. In a tragedy, normally the division between evil and good is more explicit and though there is no poetic justice, evil is vanquished and good is rewarded in the sense that the protagonist attains a perception of higher reality. From the aesthetic point of view, poetic justice is there. But poetic justice in the wordly sense - material reward for virtue and punishment for evil - is not there. In a tragical satire the conflict is more diversified. It may be between evil and evil and between evil and good. Evil is always presented as destroying and self-destructive. It has a strange magnetic attraction to draw both its own kin and the opposites, i.e. virtue towards itself. Hence the picture of life that emerges is one of total anarchy and chaos. Since the presence of a morally ordered universe is deliberately played down and the role of the supernatural or higher reality is either absent or only nominal, the suffering becomes more horrifying than aesthetically and emotionally appealing.

In a tragical satire there is a satiric persona who directs his attack with vigour and acts as a poetic device to express the authorial satiric vision. This satiric

persona is not a complex character and is incapable of any intrinsic change through suffering. "No ambiguity, no doubt about himself, no sense of mystery troubles him and he retains his monolithic certainty."[33] The plot of a tragedy as defined by Francis Fergusson, has the rhythm of "purpose, passion, and perception."[34] The tragic hero does something (purpose), and he suffers the consequences of his deeds (Passion), and this suffering eventually leads him to a new vision or understanding of himself as well as of human existence (perception). In a tragical satire the first two elements are present but the most important act of perception is lacking and hence the movement of the action is only forward. Very often there is some glittering of perception but it is no more than a much diminished recognition as compared with the tragic perception.

The tragic satirist uses a host of conventional devices of exaggeration, understatement, undercutting, grotesquery, caricature, and contrast and reversals,[35] which help bring out the sham hidden under what appears to be real. Sometimes the comic devices - incongruity, parody, distortion, etc., are also used.

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33. Ainin Kernan, The Cankered Muse : Satire of the English Renaissance (The Univ. Press, Connecticut, 1959), p.4.
34. The Idea of a Theatre (Garden City, New York,1953),p.38.
35. For details see Matthew Hodgart, Satire (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1969), pp.108, 187.

Tragical satire relies on norms which are universal, transcending time and topicality. Here the function of satire is to "reveal man's common mortality and his involvement in evil, the tragic story is the story of a few who find courage to defy such revelations."[36] Dissimulation either deliberate or resulting from misdirection is one of the principal sources of a tragical satire. Pretence, hypocrisy, deceit, or self-deceit, and pride become the chief attributes of the tragic protagonist.[37] In a tragical satire the tragic satirist is not much concerned with the actions as in the hypocritical justifications offered for them.

The characters in a tragical satire, who involve themselves in evil, appear more rediculous than wicked. Of course the tragic satirist is not interested in the novelty of ideas; rather he pays a greater attention to the manners of presenting them.

The purpose of the tragic satirist is to expose some aspect of human behaviour which seems to him foolish or vicious to demonstrate clinically that the behaviour in question is ridiculous or wicked or repulsive and to try to

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36. Travis Bogard, p.147.

37. See "Introduction" to Satire (The Univ. Press, Iowa, 1967), p. VIII.

stimulate in his reader the appropriate negative response which prepares the way to positive action.[38] In a tragical satire clear-cut detachment is not always possible because quite often the audience tends to get involved in the "heroic depravity" of the protagonist. The audience remains in a state of uncertainty or ambiguity during the course of the action and swings between "involvement and disgust, endorsement and indignation."[39] These aspects of Tragical

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38. Robert C. Eliot, The Power of Satire, Magic, Ritual, Art (Princeton Univ. Press, New Jersey, 1960).

39. Travis Bogard, The Tragic Satire of John Webster, pp.5-6.

CHAPTER II

THE WHITE DEVIL

The White Devil is the first specimen of tragical satire written by John Webster in 1612. Thematically, structurally, stylistically, as well as from the point of view of the vision of life, The White Devil stands out as a tragedy distinct from the Shakespearean models. The source of the play like that of The Duchess of Malfi is historical.[1] It is a well known fact that both the Elizabethan and Jacobean writers were fascinated by the contemporary events in Italy and by its past history which served as a rich reservoir for dramatic material. A detailed study on the historical source of The White Devil has been done by G. Boklund, who has pointed out the extent to which Webster has adhered to the actual historical events contained in the play.[2] He has also worked out the deviations from and additions to the historical data which enabled Webster to achieve his dramatic end. The purpose of the present study is not to work out the historical authenticity or otherwise of the source of the play. What we are concerned with is its relevance to the immediate milieu of England. An alien story, purporting to present the Anglo-Saxon ethos of England, acts as a distancing device against an instant

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1. John Russell Brown, "Introduction" to The White Devil (Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1960), pp.XXVI-XXVII.
2. Ibid.

involvement of the audience in their own perceptible and identifiable issues of life. Marlowe, whose pioneering contribution to the genre of tragical satire has already been mentioned, has used a German scholar and a Maltese businessman as his protagonists and has set his The Massacre at Paris in France. Tamburlaine, too, is not of the English soil. By presenting such alien stories the dramatist better exploits the audience's response for satiric purposes. This is so because the audience, caught in the current of the dramatic events uncritically, places himself at a distance, thinking that these events are not taking place in his own milieu.

The dramatic world of The White Devil is the world of all pervasive rottenness, resulting from the topsy-turvical values operating at all levels - social, religious, political, familial, etc. It shows hypocrisy, crookedness, despicable self-centredness, and beastly instincts as the controlling forces of life.

The play deals with the devilish infidelity involved in the institution of marriage, where Vittoria, the protagonist of the play, deceives her husband to be able to become the bed partner of the rich and influential Bracciano. The latter, too, deceives his wife to be able to follow his lustful path which he buys with the promises of preferment

to Vittoria as well as to her pandering brother. Bracciano's and Vittoria's adulterous involvement entails a series of disastrous events and brings suffering even to some of the virtuous characters. The action of the play is set at different places to underscore the widespread vista of evil and corruption. The play opens with a shocked surprise at the banishment of Lodovico who was the earlier lover of Isabella, the wife of Bracciano. Lodovico's banishment could have been repealed if Vittoria had spoken to Bracciano to do so. The opening scene of a formal ceremony introduces an important thematic strand. This, by a flash back, hints in a suspenseful manner at Lodovico's past which has a bearing on his present predicament. Both of these, developed later, have a significant role to play in the main action. The opening scene also introduces the main theme which is Vittoria - Bracciano affair. The scene is in the nature of conventional exposition and is largely devoted to the minor strand of the plot related to the main theme. But the dramatist exploits expository narrative to draw a picture of the corrupt society where reward and punishment depend upon prejudice, whims, and such non-judicious factors. The role of fate, "Fortune's a right whore," has been hinted at in the very opening of the play.[3]

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3. Graham Storey, ed., The White Devil in The Selected Plays of John Webster (Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, 1983), p.11.
All subsequent textual references are to this edition of the play.

However, the role of the Fate has been underplayed to highlight man-made factors in human catastrophes. Like a typical tragical satire, the play does not use any supernatural agency or any transcendental power as an influencing agent of human destiny.

The responsibility for human catastrophe squarely falls upon the beast in man whose exterior hides his inner rottenness - "your wolf no longer seems to be a wolf/Than when she's hungry."[4] The wolfish nature of man which is concealed by his hypocritical exterior of virtuosity is the main thematic burden of the play and is worked out in the subsequent scenes. Antonelli and Gasparo, friends of Lodovico, while consoling the latter on his banishment, act as satiric commentators. They draw a mirror to Lodovico in which he could see his past behaviour and activities. While their commentary concerns Lodovico directly, it also states truths of general application and relevance. Gasparo blames Lodovico for his prodigality and for his being surrounded by his psychophantic followers who have now left him when bad days have befallen him. The following lines of Gasparo sum up Lodovico's present condition, the lesson of which is intended for all:

> Your followers
> Have swallow'd you like mummia, and being sick
> With such unnatural and horrid physic
> Vomit you up i'th' kennel.[5]

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4. Ibid., p.11.
5. Ibid.

The first movement of the opening situation concludes with Gasparo's reference to justice which alone can regulate a society.[6] Lodovico acts partly as a commentator and partly as a participant in the dramatic action when he asserts that people in position and power escape being punished even when they commit greater crimes than the one he himself has committed.[7] To support this he gives the example of Bracciano who "By close panderism seeks to prostitute/The honour of Vittoria," and who "might have got my pardon/For one kiss to the duke."[8] Thus Lodovico bears a grudge against both Bracciano and Vittoria. Antonelli's attempt to comfort him through the "sweet uses of adversity" is in the nature of a homily. Webster throughout his two plays shows his predilection for such a style of using proverbs and general statements, which brings in the structural weakness of halting the movement of the plot. But the dramatic advantage of such a style is that it contributes to ironic detachment and satiric commentary which keeps the audience's moral perspective clear from the beginning of the play.

Thus even the very brief opening situation establishes Webster's technique of a tragical satire where characters

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6. Ibid., pp.12-13.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.

act as commentators as well as participants in the action; where the rottenness of the society and its inhabitants is brought out through the choric narratives; where the phrases and images concern decay, rottenness, disease, destruction cruelty, hypocrisy etc. The conventional dramatic device of exposition, through flashback narratives and commentary on the probable future course of action, has been used. The element of suspense has been introduced in the arousal of our interest in Bracciano-Vittoria affair. This affair, as mentioned in the opening scene, acts as a figure-in-action in the following scene. This characteristic device of Webster is discernible throughout the play.

The second situation of Act I opens with Bracciano and Flamineo, conspiring to put Camillo, Vittoria's husband, out of Bracciano's way to Vittoria's bed. Flamineo tells Camillo that he would work out a compromise between the latter and Vittoria who have had estranged relationship for sometime. Camillo clarifies the reason of the ruptured relationship with his wife :

> The duke your master visits me; I thank him,
> And I perceive how like an earnest bowler,
> He very passionately leans that way
> He should have his bowl run.[9]

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9. Ibid., p. 16.

> ...'Faith, his cheek
> Hath a most excellent bias; it would fain
> Jump with my mistress.[10]

But Flamineo in a hypocritical manner pretends to be Camillo's friend and asks the latter to be watchful of his wife so that she could not indulge in lustful activities with Bracciano. Flamineo gives an impression as if he is unaware of Vittoria's relations with Bracciano and the intrigues conspired against Camillo. But Camillo unconsciously hints at it "Come you know not where my night cap wrings me." The future course of the action is foretold by Flamineo in his use of low mundane images of 'cuckold', 'coxcomb', 'provocative electuaries', etc., for Camillo. These images in conjunction with the images from bowling sports, contained in the above two quotes, ominously hint at Camillo's present predicament and future lot.

Flamineo successfully tries to keep Camillo away from Vittoria's bed and convinces him that his "suspicion is nothing but "jealousy" which has "put him into a horrible causeless fury". Meanwhile Vittoria is presented on the scene and Flamineo whispers to her of Camillo's suspicious nature. Using his characteristic device of Machiavellian

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10. Ibid.

tricks, Webster presents Flamineo as an intriguer, who is trying to convince Camillo with an argument enwrapped in ambiguous ominousness :

> Thou shalt lie in a bed stuff'd with turtles'feathers, swoon in perfum'd linen like the fellow was smother'd in roses; so perfect shall be thy happiness, that as men at sea think land and trees and ships go that way they go, so both heaven and earth shall seem to go your voyage. Shalt meet him,'tis fix'd, with nails of diamonds to inevitable necessity.[11]

We see that Flamineo is using the various images which ironically throw light on his own evil nature and on the worthlessness, stupidity, and impotence of Camillo. Flamineo plays here both as a satiric commentator as well as a participant in the action. He gulls Camillo in a most qualitative manner and shuts him close into a room to avoid any chance of his intruding upon Bracciano's "amorous progress."

"The close panderism to prostitute the honour of Vittoria" presented in the previous situation in figure-in-speech is now presented in figure-in-action as Bracciano pays a pre-planned visit to Vittoria's bed chamber. Flamineo welcomes Bracciano. But inspite of his warm

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11. Ibid., p.20.

reception offered by Flamineo, Bracciano remains sceptical of the possibility of the fulfilment of his lustful dream. Some sort of uncertainty and fear haunts Bracciano as he wonders "Are we so happy?" Though the context is lustful, the sweep and flavour of the situation is ironically erotic and highly romantic. But in this world of disruption Webster does not allow any meaningful emotional satisfaction to the participants in their sensual encounter. The way to satisfaction and fulfilment is checkered with the fear born out of an awareness of the guilty basis of the whole affair. A similar situation is discernible in the romantic meeting between the Duchess and Antonio in The Duchess of Malfi, where the passionate satisfaction of the romantic encounter is brutally undercut by an undefined sense of fear. However, Bracciano's doubts are cleared by Flamineo's explaining Vittoria's "coyness " as the "superficies of lust." He goes to argue that women know by policy that "our desire is increased by the difficulty of enjoying." Nevertheless, Bracciano remains fearful of Vittoria's jealous husband. To prove his argument Flamineo gives several examples and even appears as an experienced instructor to Bracciano. Flamineo's following commentary in the context of the lustful drama throws light on Vittoria's character, though it has been given a wider dimension :

> ....'Tis just like a summer bird cage in garden; the birds that are without despair to get in, and the birds that are within despair and are in a consumption for fear they shall never get out.[12]

As we know that Camillo has already been locked into a closet, the stage eventually is left open for the two "amorous actors." Bracciano is sent by Flamineo to Vittoria who has been waiting for the arrival of the former all alone in her bed chamber. He "vows" and "suplicates" to Vittoria in the manner of a romantic lover, and promises never to forsake her. This amorous encounter has a characteristic Marlovian echo:

> ....I could wish time would stand still
> And never end this interview, this hour,
> But all delight doth itself soon'st devour.[13]

This reminds us of Faustus who ironically expresses "immortal joy" in his act of demoniality with Helen and then later frantically supplicates to cosmic powers to arrest the course of nature. Dido's lustful involvement with Aeneas in the cave scene in Dido the Queene of Carthage has a similar erotic dissimulation. In his effort to trap Camillo into his conspiracy, Flamineo talks of morals and sexual virtues which is ironically paradoxical in the context of his own being an instrument in demolishing them.

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12. Ibid., p.15.
13. Ibid., p.21.

Bracciano plays cuckold to Camillo and the whole situation is prophetically commented upon by Cornelia thus:

> My son the pander: now I find our house
> Sinking to ruin. Earthquakes leave behind
> Where they have tyranniz'd iron, or lead, or stone.
> But, woe to ruin! violent lust leaves none.[14]

Thus before the 'happy union' of Bracciano and Vittoria fructifies into physical satisfaction, Cornelia's stormy foreboding propels the movement of the action into a disastrous direction. To pass the time, during the lustful course, Vittoria suggests the destruction of the two possible hinderances in the course of her lustful journey, through a concocted dream story. The dream narrative serves as a device of distancing which is used by Webster often before a violent event because it makes the destructive happening maximally effective. Vittoria's dream narration is full of both good and bad images. While the 'yew tree' stands for good and virtue, the 'churchyard', 'grave', 'pick-axe', and the 'rusty spade' stand for destruction. Besides, the images of 'withered black thorn' and 'mildew on a flower' used by the two lovers, are full of dramatic irony, because they denote destruction of the very things these lustful lovers plan to have. Vittoria, though a devil incarnate,

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14. Ibid., p.22.

through her romantic protestations to hide her lustful inclinations for preferment, is presented in such a light that the audience's moral perspective is likely to be vitiated by its tendency to endorse her conspiracy suggested in her narrative of the dream. But Flamineo's frequent use of the term devil for Vittoria is intended to steady the moral perspective of the audience.

Bracciano's promises of love, protection, delight, and frustration in the manner of a romantic lover are immediately crossed by Cornelia, who like a 'lightning' in the otherwise quiet atmosphere, shoots on the stage and pronounces curses of doom on the two adulterous lovers: "Woe to light hearts they still forerun our fall." Frightened, Flamineo tries to control Cornelia but she does not stop and almost unnerves Bracciano by the information that Isabella, his wife, is come to Rome; she reminds him of his duties as a duke:

> The lives of princes should like dials move,
> Whose regular example is so strong,
> They make the times by them go right or wrong.[15]

Cornelia's reprimand to the Duke in a proverbial language seems to be in the nature of stalling the pace of the action. But it serves one useful function of a tragical

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15. Ibid., p.24.

satire which is to lash at the prevalent contemporary vice. The first Act ends with an altercation between Flamineo and Cornelia. Flamineo breaks into a revelation as to why he has been playing the pander. His bold and candid explanation of his present role makes even Cornelia's protestations of morality, human dignity, and other social and ethical values, look very shaky:

> Pray what means have you
> To keep me from the galleys, or the gallows?
> My father prov'd himself a gentleman,
> Sold all's land, and like a fortunate fellow,
> Died ere the money was spent. You brought me up,
> At Padua I confess, where I protest,
> For want of means (the university judge me)
> I have been fain to heel my tutor's stockings
> At least seven years; conspiring with a beard
> Made me a graduate; then to this duke's service.
> I visited the court, whence I return'd
> More courteous, more lecherous by far,
> But not a suit the richer. And shall I,
> Having a path so open and so free
> To my preferment still retain your milk
> In my pale forehead?[16]

Flamineo's eloquence in the defense of evil is so logical, persuasive, and convincing that it can well entice the reader's endorsement. Webster presents the picture of

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16. Ibid., pp.25-26.

evil in such likeable terms that an unawary reader may sometime get away with the impression that like Milton in his Paradise Lost, he belongs to 'the devil's party.' But his subsequent exposing of the pleasantly shaped devil in Flamineo proves the impression to be otherwise. The facade of amorous drama which hides sinful involvement of the lovers is in the typical ironic mode which forms the fulcrum of the tragical satire. The course of the action in the first Act amply establishes the dramaturgical strategies of Webster. Corruption, despicable materialism, and violation of relational values are presented in starkly realistic terms. A brother is determined to pander the honour of his sister for material gain which will install him in social esteem through money. Money is the ruling deity of the society which can corrupt virtue into evil. A wife is more than a villain to gull her husband to dishonour her nuptial bed for preferment. The end has to justify the means. Hence Vittoria does not hesitate to suggest in her dream narrative the destruction of Bracciano's wife and her own husband. Flamineo uses all the wits at his command to gull Camillo so that he is away for the night to allow free time for Bracciano to be with Vittoria. A seeming ambivalence in manipulating the reader's response to evil has been used, in the manner of the Marlovian dramaturgy, in the opening Act. Structurally the Act follows a conventional methodology of

exposition through developing complication gradually. The complication comprises Camillo as a hinderance, Cornelia as a difficult overseer and the reported arrival of Isabella. Webster has used the device of underscoring vignettes which contribute to dramatic effect. There are three vignettes in the first Act: the scene in which Flamineo gulls Camillo into going away from Vittoria's proximity; the amorous encounter between Vittoria and Bracciano being violently concluded by the lightning entry of Cornelia, and Flamineo's strong defense of his panderism, ending in Cornelia's being left shocked and speechless. Flamineo's concluding speech suggests the course of action of the following Act:

> The Duchess comes to court? I like not that;
> We are engag'd to mischief and must on.
> As rivers to find out the ocean
> Flow with crook bendings beneath forced banks,
> Or as we see, to aspire some mountain's top
> The way ascends not straight but imitates
> The subtle foldings of a winter's snake,
> So who knows policy and her true aspect,
> Shall find her ways winding and indirect.[17]

Hypocrisy, crookedness, and Machiavellian machinations, which were presented in the last Act under the cover of a superficial facade of agreeableness, appear in the second Act in their nakedness. Bracciano's hypocrisy which remained

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17. Ibid., pp.26-27.

enwrapped in amorousness in the previous Act, appears in a repulsive form when he puts the blame of his violent rupture of his relationship with his wife upon the latter and seals her mouth with a promise extorted from her that she will never let the truth be disclosed. Flamineo's half-digested plan of getting rid of Camillo is to materialize into a murderous strategy that Isabella should also be done in. In the midst of moves and countermoves of the schemers, the presence of Giovanni and his talk of a precocious child acts as a diluting factor. But at the same time it intensifies the gloom by contrast, which has threatened to engulf almost all the characters of the play. There are five clearly delineated movements in the first scene of the second Act. They are the encounter between Francisco and Bracciano, Isabella's confession to her brother that she has vowed to separate herself from her husband; Francisco-Camillo-Flamineo conspiracy; and the Doctor's arrival before the scene ends.

We had seen in the previous Act that Isabella's coming to Rome was a threatening hinderance in Flamineo's plan relating to Bracciano-Vittoria affair. We see with the opening of the second Act that it gives a new turn to the movement of the action. The first movement of the action begins as Francisco gets acquainted with Bracciano's lustful

affairs with Vittoria, told to him by his sister Isabella. He becomes infuriated and is determined to teach Bracciano a lesson for this. On the other hand, Isabella, still hoping that Bracciano will respond to her charms, asks Francisco not to deal roughly with him. But before Isabella could do so, Monticelso, a Cardinal and kinsman to Bracciano reminds and warns his master of his duties through a homily:

> ....should (you) in your prime age
> Neglect your awful throne for the soft down
> Of an insatiate bed. O my lord,
> The drunkard after all his lavish cups
> Is dry, and then is sober, so at length
> When you awake from this lascivious dream,
> Repetance then will follow, like the sting
> Plac'd in the adder's tail.[18]

The above homily servs to provide a rapid flow to the movement of the action. Besides, the images drawn here from 'drinking', 'adder's tail', and 'destruction' are functional as they predict the future course of the action. Francisco accuses Bracciano for his lustful indulgence with Vittoria. He presents it in a satiric speech which is full of images of preying and cunning sports:

> I'll answer you in your own hawking phrase
> Some eagles that should gaze upon the sun

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18. Ibid., p.28.

Seldom soar high, but take their lustful ease,
Since they from dunghill birds their prey can seize.[19]

Francisco reminds Bracciano of the moment when he was married to Isabella. Bracciano-Francisco's mutual accusations, altercation, and defiance of each other, though ending in a seeming compromise, foretells their destructive future. In the midst of all this Giovanni's entrance and his child-like talkativeness brings a temporary relief to the poisonous and destructive atmosphere. But very soon Giovanni's peaceful intrusion and humorous talk, totally unconnected with the present acrimonious situation, is contrasted with the tense situation of Bracciano-Isabella meeting. Giovanni's entrance seems to have only one dramatic function and that is to show the existence of innocence and virtue in the midst of rottenness so that towards the end of the play the dramatist may use him as a device for the restoration of normalcy after the havocs of evil, in the conventional manner of a typical tragedy.

Bracciano, himself an adulterer, ironically questions Isabella: "what amorous whirlwind hurried you to Rome?" Here the behaviours of Isabella and Bracciano are contrasted. Isabella's protestations of love, loyalty, and her politeness

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19. Ibid., p.29.

are confronted with Bracciano's unmanly and bitter retort: "accursed be the priest/That sang the wedding mass, and even my issue." This is certainly Bracciano's despicable affrontery. The virtuous Isabella suffers on account of the tyranny of her husband who, rejecting her protestations of love and fidelity, forces divorce on her. The helpless Isabella suffers and endures all this with superb restraint. Even when condemned, she remains faithful to Bracciano and tells Francisco that it is no fault of Bracciano but hers. She takes on herself the whole charge:

> I do beseech you
> Entreat him mildly, let not your rough tongue
> Set us at louder variance; all my wrongs
> Are freely pardon'd, and I do not doubt,
> As men to try the precious unicorn's horn
> Make of the powder a preservative circle
> And in it put a spider, so these arms
> Shall charm his poison, force it to be obeying
> And keep him chaste from an infected straying.[20]

> .... I will make
> Myself the author of your cursed vow;
> I have some cause to do it,you have none,
> Conceal it I beseech you, for the weal
> Of both your dukedoms, that you wrought the means
> Of such a separation; let the fault
> Remain with my supposed jealousy,

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20. Ibid., p.27-28.

> And think with what a piteous and rent heart
> I shall perform this sad ensuing part.[21]

She charges Vittoria as the root cause of all her tragedy. After this she determines to leave the palace for Padua.

The fourth movement of the action takes place immediately after Isabella's exit to Padua. We see two camps of conspirators distinctly governed by Francisco-Monticelso, and Flamineo-Bracciano. While the former group plans to get Camillo away, the latter camp is busy with conspiring how to get Isabella done in through deception and treachery with the assistance of Dr. Julio. It is relevant to look at the perverted values being followed by the religious and medical professionals. The Cardinal, ignoring his religious duties, does not hesitate to misuse his office for deceitful activities whereas the doctor is better specialized in murder than in treatment. Flamineo's role as a satirical commentator is better seen here at this juncture as he comments on the above mentioned two persons:

> He will shoot pills into a man's guts, shall make them have more ventages than a cornet or a lamprey; he will poison a kiss, and was once minded, for his masterpiece, because Ireland breeds no poison, to have prepared a

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21. Ibid., p.35.

> deadly vapour in a Spaniard's fart that should have poison'd all Dublin.[22]

> O thou curs'd antipathy to nature! Look, his eye's bloodshed like a needle a Chirugeon stitcheth a wound with. Let me embrace thee, toad, and love thee, O thou abhominable loathsome gargarism, that will fetch up lungs, lights, heart, and liver by scruples.[23]

Bracciano's ironically calling Julio the 'honest doctor' is only a scathing satire on the latter's character. Before leaving the stage to meet Camillo and Francisco, Flamineo presents himself as a commentator on his own evil nature:

> .... when Knaves come to preferment they rise as gallowes are raised i' th' Low countries, one upon another's shoulders.[24]

Webster brings in his characteristic device of distancing through Francisco's narration of the supposed story of the sun, the god of light. It serves two purposes, first it diverts our attention from the conspirators and secondly it throws light on Camillo's cuckoldry. The narration is full of images of murder, lust, deception, on the one hand, while on the other, we have images from Ovid's

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22. Ibid., p.38.
23. Ibid., pp.38-39.
24. Ibid.

Metamorphoses ('abundance has made me destitude') and Virgil's Aeneid ('it shall be treasured up in the depths of my mind'). The conjunction of these two groups of opposing images reinforces the idea of perverted values, and confusion of norms, controlling the life of people in the world of The White Devil.

In the next situation, the two murders of Camillo and Isabella are shown through dumb shows. Isabella, who was habitual of kissing her husband's portrait before going to bed, dies of kissing it because it has now been secretely poisoned by Dr. Julio. And Camillo is finished by Flamineo through the game of 'vaulting a horse.' This seems to make Bracciano's path to pursue Vittoria clear because the two apparent potent hurdles in his way are removed. Through the dumb shows the action of the play is economized. Besides, it not only increases the tempo of performance by telescoping the plot but also subdues the effect of horror. The Act ends with yet another satiric speech, this time made by the conjurer:

> Both flowers and weeds spring when the sun is warm
> As great men do great good, or else great harm.[25]

Eliot and Bradbrooke have objected to Webster's use of

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25. Ibid., p.45.

different dramatic conventions which result in confusion.[26] This is so because both the critics have been looking for consistencies and homogeneity of dramatic conventions in Webster's plays. This has certainly been disrupted by bringing in the ill-fitting convention of a dumb show. But Webster's intention has been to present the horrific aspect of an event alongwith the conventional movement of the play. Hence the two dumb shows, rather than dramatic narration, are in place in the context of the dramatist's intention of presenting evil in its physically horrific manifestation.

By the end of the second Act we see that the motives of the two camps of intriguers are quite clear. Bracciano's murderous intention is motivated by his relationship with Vittoria; Francisco's sending Camillo away is a means to avenge on Bracciano who has done wrong to Isabella. But as the text shows, Francisco is a kinsman to Bracciano, the former's motif creates a little confusion, though it has been defined by Monticelso:

> It may be objected I am dishonourable,
> To play thus with my kinsman; but I answer,
> For my revenge I'd stake a brother's life
> That being wrong'd durst not avenge himself.[27]

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26. See M.C. Bradbrooke, Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy (The Univ. Press, Cambridge, 1935), pp.186-87; T.S. Eliot, Selected Essays (Fabre & Fabre, London, 1932), pp.96-97.

27. See The White Devil, quoted earlier, p.42.

It again creates a confusion because the context of the motif has been left undefined and it comes as a sudden surprise, arousing suspicion which is not dramatic.

The third Act deals mainly with the trial of Vittoria where almost all the major characters appear in their true devilish shapes. The trial is arranged by Monticelso and Francisco who plan to expose Bracciano's adultery and thus to defame him publicly. So far as Vittoria is concerned, Monticelso and Francisco have nothing "but circumstances/ to charge her with, about her husband's death." But the witness of the Leiger Ambassadors "to the proofs/of her black lust, shall make her infamous/to all our neighbouring kingdoms."[28] The motives, moods, and tone of the action is hinted at in the very beginning of the Act, in references to lust, whore master, cuckold, etc. Flamineo's intention to "put on this feigned garb of Mirth/ To gull suspicion," throws further light on his villainous nature. This opening situation brings out the character's Machiavellian machinations. The conversation between Flamineo and the lawyer and again between Flamineo and Marcello, his own brother, is a commentary upon the rottenness of the contemporary social milieu. This commentary, befittingly contained in images of deception and destruction, has

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28. Ibid., p.

extended significance because it dilates upon the predicament of even honest workers in the service of unscrupulous masters:

> Hum! thou art a soldier,
> Followest the great duke, feedest his victories
> And witches do their serviceable spirits,
> Even with thy prodigal blood; what has got?
> But like the wealth of captains, a poor handful,
> Which in thy palm thou bear'st: as men hold water
> Seeking to gripe it fast, the frail reward
> Steals through thy fingers.[29]

> Hear me -
> And thus when we have even pour'd ourselves
> Into great fights, for their ambition
> Or idle spleen, how shall we find reward?
> But as we seldom find the mistletoe,
> Sacred to physic, on the builder oak
> Without a mandrake by it, so in our quest of gain
> Alas, the poorest of their forc'd dislikes:
> This is lamented doctrine.[30]

In this situation Flamineo is simultaneously both a satiric commentator and a participant in the action. Flamineo's detached commentary in his remarks upon the Ambassadors is significant:

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29. Ibid., p.47.
30. Ibid., pp.47-48.

> I saw him at last tilting: he show'd like a pewter candlestick fashion'd like a man in armour holding a tilting staff in his hand, little bigger than a candle of twelve i' th' pound.[31]

> He carries his face in's ruff, as I have seen a serving-man carry glasses in a cypress hat bound, monstrous steady for fear of breaking. He looks like the claw of a blackbird, first salted and then broil'd in a candle.[32]

Before the trial begins, Flamineo's discourse with Marcello discloses his evil intent for Machiavellian preferment. It is confirmed by his reply to Marcello who charges him with being the "stalking horse" of Bracciano to undo Vittoria. To this Flamineo replies, "I made a kind path /. To her and mine own preferment." To support his argument Flamineo gives several reasons to Marcello.[33] Marcello's suggestion for love, respect, honesty, and virtue are contrasted with Flamineo's Machiavellian principles. Ironically it seems as if Marcello's homily on virtuous and good conduct is not a topic even worth discussion as the intrusion of the Ambassadors makes it negligible. Marcello's protestations of morality, loyalty, and ethical values,

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31. Ibid., p.48.
32. Ibid., p.49.
33. Ibid., pp.47-48.

ironically sounds insipid when juxtaposed by Flamineo's eulogy of evil as a potent means of preferment in a corrupt world in which their lot has been cast. Of course, Flamineo's argument may sound convincing because by now we have a good inkling into the evil world of these inhabitants. But in a subtle, satirical manner Webster manipulates our alienation from Flamineo's stand which has only a relative validity in the context of his selfish games.

Webster provides an oportunity to look at the corrupt judicial system through the trial-scene, where the accused are lesser criminals than the prosecutors themselves. Flamineo's brief comments on the French and the Spanish Ambassadors acquaint us with the wide-spread corruption in the alien dukedoms and duchies. It is relevant here to comment on Flamineo's sparing the English Ambassador from his satiric whipping. In fact the Elizabethans were very much fond of seeing foreign rulers and characters ridiculed on the stage as contrasted with the English who were assumed to be judicious and relatively morally upright. However, the English Ambassador's attitude to the whole drama of trial is quite fair and judicious.

Throughout the trial scene Vittoria defends herself with "innocence resembling boldness." The trial begins with

the Lawyer, charging Vittoria in Latin, at which she protests defiantly:

> I will not have my accusation clouded
> In a strange tongue: all this assembly
> Shall hear what you can charge me with.[34]

The Lawyer's ignorance, prejudice, incompetence, and hollowness of mind are not pointed out by Vittoria alone, but are also seen clearly by Francisco who asked him to "put up your paper in your fustian bag, and cry mercy." The Lawyer is dismissed and, Monticelso, the corrupt Cardinal himself takes over as a prosecutor and opens the suit. It is strongly objected to by Vittoria: "It doth not suit a reverened Cardinal/To play the Lawyer thus." But for want of any proof, Monticelso could not charge Vittoria. He calls her a whore merely on the basis of her remaining unmournful on her husband's death and her entrapping the Duke Bracciano into her lustful charms. But she faces all the accusations boldly with superb mental resourcefulness, argumentative skill and undauntable courage. Her protestations and arguments earn the praise of the English Ambassador who exclaims "She hath a brave spirit." Vittoria's boldness and resourcefulness of mind are clearly discernible in her assertion:

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34. Ibid., p.50.

> For know that all your strict combined heads
> Which strike against this mine of diamonds
> Shall prove but glassen hammers, they shall break;
> These are but feigned shadows of my evils.
> Terrify babes, my lord, with painted devils,
> I am past such needless palsy; for your names
> Of whore and murd'ress, they proceed from you.
> As if a man should spit against the wind;
> The filth returns in 's face.[35]

Vittoria's courageous defence makes Monticelso almost nervous. Disappointed, he sticks to one instance and charges her with the guilt of incontinence:

> Pray you mistress, satisfy me one question:
> Who lodg'd beneath your roof that fatal night
> Your husband brake his neck.[36]

This at once brings Bracciano into action because he fears that Vittoria may not be able to defend herself on this account. He replies:

> .... I came to comfort her
> And make some course for setting her estate,
> Because I heard her husband was in debt
> To you, my lord.[37]

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35. Ibid., p.55.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.

Monticelso admits this. But Bracciano's exposing himself could not bring any additional defence to Vittoria's suit. However it disclosed Monticelso's Jewish mentality which is in contrast with his role of a religious pillar. However, Vittoria once again proves competent enough to defend herself alone and this frustrates Monticelso's designs:

> Condemn you me for that the duke did love me.
> So may you blame some fair and crystal river
> For that some melancholic distracted man,
> Hath drown'd himself in 't.[38]

> Sum up my faults I pray, and you shall find
> That beauty and gay clothes, a merry heart,
> And a good stomach to a feast, are all
> All the poor crimes that you can charge me with.[39]

Though Vittoria plays the white devil, her bold and courageous protestations are so subtle and to the point that they bring all the machinery of the judicial administration in ridicule. Vittoria challenges the Cardinal:

> .... If you be my accuser
> Pray cease to be my judge, come from the bench,
> Give in your evidence against me, and let these
> Be moderators.[40]

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38. Ibid., p.57.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., p.58.

But the judicial system is so perverted and bent upon roping in Vittoria that her defence is completely ignored and she is declared a "most notorious strumpet." Finally, the judgement is announced and Vittoria is ordered to be "lodged into a house of convertites," meant specially for "penitent whores." But it does not make Vittoria nervous and she boldly, but with scathing irony, retorts: "Do the nobleman in Rome/Erect it for their wives?"[41] The corrupt court system is again brought into a bold relief when Vittoria vehemently protests: "A rape, a rape .... you have ravished justice/Forc'd her to do your pleasure."[42] The Cardinal simulates and calls Vittoria mad, equating her to a 'Fury.' The reference to the 'Fury' is also ironic. The 'Fury' in Greek tragedies pursued the guilty and was itself an instrument of divine justice. In the present context Vittoria is herself a devilish character. What distinguishes her from other devilish characters of the play is her candidness, courage, and guts to say the truth. In fact she emerges as a heroic character towards the end of the trial scene when she refuses to yield to the verdict of the combined forces of religion and civil administration. It is because of this that the audience tends to be drawn

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41. Ibid., p.59.

42. Ibid., p.60.

towards her and feel like sympathising with her. Before leaving the assembly of the crookeds, she announces her heroic manifesto:

> .... I will not weep.
> No I do scorn to call up one poor tear
> To fawn on your injustice; bear me hence,
> Unto this house....[43]

> It shall not be a house of convertites;
> My mind shall make it honester to me
> Than the Pope's palace and more peaceable
> Then thy soul, though thou art a Cardinal
> Know this, and let it somewhat raise your spite,
> Through darkness diamonds spread their richest light.[44]

Webster's use of contrasting images - dimonds through darkness, friend's grave-heightens the power of his poetic language. Moreover, the destructive images of madness, fury, rape, revenge, curse, forebode the future course of the action. The second scene of the third Act ends with the discovery of Isabella's death at which Francisco and Giovanni grieve. Giovanni's expression of grief (I have often heard her say she gave me suck) tends to make the mood of the situation rather sentimental. But it serves to humanise the otherwise devilish milieu presented so far.

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43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.

The next situation is the discovery of Isabella's death. As we have seen that till this point her death was not discovered and hence Vittoria was spared this charge. Now Bracciano, to gull suspicion, offers a friendly relationship with Francisco who is determined to destroy Vittoria. Francisco is puzzeled by this sudden offer of friendship from Bracciano. Flamineo, playing continuously the Machiavellian villain, pretends to be a politic madman to "escape suspicion" because of his role in Isabella's murder. The situation ends in a mood which is contrasted with that of the opening scene. Webster does this through Francisco's expression of profound grief at his sister's death and his nephew's childlike talks about the state in which the dead are. Even at this juncture, Webster does not spare his satiric sting as the comments on Isabella's death are meant to echo Vittoria's reaction to her husband's death in the early part of the scene to underscore the hollowness of the Cardinal's charity and morality:

Monticelso: Blessed lady, thou art now above thy woes, will't please your lordships to withdraw a little?[45]

Vittoria: O he 's a happy husband
Now he owes Nature nothing.[46]

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45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., p.54.

The second scene of the third Act, containing various moods, and movements, is a great creation of Webster. In this scene Vittoria appears as a diamond, though a white devil she is; here Flamineo's guilt is neglected and he is declared innocent; here Francisco's threats and moves are worked out; here Vittoria's 'Fury' is worked out; and here Lodovico swears to avenge the death of his former flame. Lodovico, who had been a looker on only, now after getting his banishment pardoned, determines to play a significant role in the movement of the play.

In the next situation, Lodovico tries to understand Flamineo's feigned madness and his being declared innocent by the court judgement. But Flamineo is clever enough and makes friendship with Lodovico, intending to sabotage the latter's evil machinations. Flamineo's distracted manner gives Webster an opportunity to run a satiric commentary on the evil and corrupt ones. The Savoy Ambassador tries to console the distracted Flamineo to which the latter retorts satirically:

> Your comfortable words are like honey. They relish well in your mouth that's whole; but in mine that's wounded they go down as if the sting of the bee were in them. O, they have wrought their purpose cunningly, as if they would not seem to do it of malice. In this a politician

> imitates the devil as the devil imitates a canon wheresoever he comes to do mischief, he comes with his backside towards you.[47]

Flamineo's reply to the French Ambassador gives an opportunity to look at the corrupt court judgements that are announced under the heavy pressure of money:

> .... O gold, what a god art thou! and O man, what devil are thou to be tempted by that cursed mineral! Knaves turn informers as maggots turn to fields; you may catch gudgeons with either. A Cardinal-I would he would hear me - there's nothing so holy but money will corrupt and putrify it, like victual under the live.[48]

Seeing the English Ambassador Flamineo does not stop his satiric sting and continues:

> .... you are happy in England, my Lord; here they sell justice with those weights they presse men to death with.[49]

Flamineo satirizes the Cardinal as a religious pillar:

> Religion O how it is commedled with policy! The first bloodshed in the world happened about religion. Would I were a Jew.

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47. Ibid., p.63.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.

> .... For if there were jews enough, so many christians would not turn usurers, if priests enough, one should not have six beneficies, and if gentleman enough, so many early mushrooms, whose best growth sprang from dunghill, should not aspire to gentility.[50]

The third Act ends with four movements, foreboding the future course of the fourth Act. The first is the Lodovico-Flamineo covenant to live as friends, which is only a hypocritical pretension to deceive and gull each other. It shows that even the agents of evil from the two groups can come close together in their destructive plans which we have seen in the famous Vittoria trial-scene. Secondly Lodovico, revealing his past love for Isabella, would like to avenge her murder. Thirdly, Bracciano plans to retrieve Vittoria from the house of convertites when the administration remains busy in the 'Papal Election.' And fourthly, Francisco, who had not made his intention for revenge clear, is now up in arms to have it, and conspires to get both Bracciano and Vittoria done in. Hence all these anticipated movements, which emerge as powerful guiding sources, prepare the outline of the next situation.

The fourth Act takes up all these threads of the plot and develop them to a greater complexity. We see in the very opening that Monticelso instigates Francisco who quits

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50. Ibid., p.64.

the scene apparently to prove his intention of taking a revenge for his sister's murder. Monticelso's earlier exhortations to Francisco are full of the image of deception and destruction, foreboding the future course of the action:

> .... Undermining more prevails
> Than doth the canon: bear your wrongs conceal'd,
> And, patient as the tortoise, let this camel
> Stalk o'er your back unbruis'd! Sleep with the lion,
> And let this brood of secure foolish mice
> Play with your nostrils, till the time be ripe
> For the bloody audit, and the fatal gripe;
> Aim like a cunning fowler, close one eye,
> That you the better may your game espy.[51]

Francisco's use of the images of lechery, treachery, thunder, treason, spiders etc. is soon followed by figures-in-action as we see Monticelso, to support his instigation, provides a 'black book' wherein he keeps "the names of all the notorious offenders/ Lurking about the city." Though Francisco needs the services of the criminals to destroy Bracciano, he does not want Monticelso to know his evil nature. Francisco-Monticelso machinations to avenge the death of Isabella provide us an opportunity to look at the civil and religious pillars who can stoop to such an abysmal low and yet keep up the facade of virtuosity that we can

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51. Ibid., pp.68-69.

call them also "the white devils!" Francisco's ironic commentary on Monticelso's maintaining the list of criminals for devilish uses is tinged with satire:

> You are a worthy member of the state,
> And have done infinite good in your discovery
> Of these offenders.[52]

At this juncture the ghost of Isabella appears. But it neither instigates Francisco to avenge her murder nor does it purport to evoke any supernatural horror. Francisco, now fully determined to undermine Bracciano, longs to have "some idle mirth in his tragedy." For this he follows the Machiavellian policy of pretending to be in love with Vittoria. He writes her a letter which he would send to her in the presence of Bracciano or his friends so that he should come to know Vittoria's love with others and hence get infuriated against her. To be assisted in his plot he wants to use Lodovico whom he has pardoned a short while ago. He wants this because Lodovico, too, is armed against Bracciano and Vittoria. Francisco would follow the characteristic device of bribery because "'Tis gold must such an instrument procure,/With empty fist no man doth falcons love." We see here that mutual distrust between apparently friendly contrivers, Machiavellian conspiracy,

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52. Ibid., p.70.

buying services of notorious criminals for selfish ends and prostitution of religious norms for personal, vindictive purposes, present a picture of gloom which has engulfed the world of The White Devil. Reliance on or support of the supernatural or divine norms has completely been set aside. It is the beastly human agents who have completely taken over the responsibility of controlling human destiny. In such a situation, naturally, sufferings and deaths do not produce tragic emotions where the reader's involvement and empathy may come out involuntarily. The reader on the contrary shudders at the prospect of the hellish course of actions and remains detached to view the whole panorama of devilish moves and countermoves in an ironic perspective.

The images mentioned in the previous scene are followed in action in the following situation where the preplanned love letter of Francisco, which is full of amorous promises, is delivered to Vittoria. As Francisco would have wished it, by chance both Flamineo and Bracciano are present at this time. Flamineo at once takes up the sent letter which Bracciano reads. The content of the letter infuriates Bracciano who accuses Vittoria in a more detestable manner than she was condemned in the trial scene. Vittoria's protestations of innocence are of no avail. They only add fuel to the fire of Bracciano's heated

up temper.[53] Flamineo would not let them become separated, and intervenes, because it will jeopardise his own prospects of advancement. In his effort to work out a compromise between Bracciano and Vittoria, he is abused and reprimanded by both. Vittoria exchanges heated arguments with Bracciano. Her accusations which seem to have a strong logic almost draw sympathy from the audience. The following lines portray Vittoria as not only courageous and bold but also as superbly eloquent and mentally agile and resourceful:

> What have I gain'd by thee but infamy?
> Thou hast stain'd the spotless honour of my house,
> And frighted thence noble society!
> Like those, which sick o' th' palsy and retain
> Ill scenting foxes 'bout them, are still shunn'd
> By those of choicer nostrils. What do you call this house?
> Is this your palace? Did not the judge style it
> A house of penitent whores? Who sent me to it?
> Who hath the honour to advance Vittoria
> To this incontinent College? Is 't not you?
> Is't not your high preferment? Go, go brag
> How many ladies you have undone, like me.
> Fare you well Sir; let me hear no more of you.
> I had a limb corrupted to an ulcer,
> But I have cut it off: and now I'll go
> Weeping to heaven on crutches....[54]

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53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., p.78.

However, Flamineo does not give in and contrives with his argument and supplication to both to patch up their differences resulting from misunderstanding. He does it not so much for the peace between the two adulterous lovers as for his own future prospects which precariously hinge on their continuing relationship. Flamineo succeeds to an extent as the heated altercations and accusations between Bracciano and Vittoria are brought to a smooth conclusion through Flamineo's cunning and manipulated double dealing. Bracciano declares that he is charmed and surrenders to Vittoria:

> Once to be jealous of thee is t' express
> That I will love thee everlastingly,
> And never more be jealous.[55]

Flamineo, playing the satiric commentator as well as a participant in the action does not spare even this compromising situation uncommented. He harps on women:

> Best natures do commit the grossest faults
> When they're giv'n o'er to jealousy; as best wine,
> Dying, makes strongest vinegar. I'll tell you:
> The sea's more rough and raging than calm-rivers,
> But nor so sweet nor wholesome. A quiet woman
> Is a still water under a great bridge!
> A man may shoot her safely.[56]

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55. Ibid., p.79.
56. Ibid., pp.80-81.

Vittoria accepts Bracciano's request for pardon to ignore his suspicion resulting from a misunderstanding, but cunningly reminds him of his promise of preferment to her. Flamineo is only too prompt to chime in with her: "My lord supply your promises with deeds./ You know that painted meat no hunger feeds." Bracciano, well caught in the trap, cannot but accept these reminders of preferment. He plans to arrange Vittoria's escape from the house of convertites as "The Pope being dead; and all the Cardinals entered/The conclave for th' electing a new Pope/The city in a great confusion," will help him to carry out his plan. Bracciano reiterates his promise of the title of Duchess to Vittoria, and a corresponding material advancement for her. Flamineo exploits this situation in reminding Bracciano of his own role and the promise made to him through the anecdote of the crocodile and the wren. It also foretells a warning to Bracciano against the consequences in case promises of reward to Flamineo are not fulfilled. The anecdotel device is a characteristic quality of Webster to ease a tense situation. It also functions as a distancing device. The anecdote is in character and dramatically effective because it also points to the direction the main plot is going to take.

The next situation opens with Francisco whose plot to poison the fame of Bracciano seems succeeding as Monticelso

is elected Pope. Monticelso, with the newly vested authority, speaks in a different tongue. It is needful here to comment on the wide-spread corruption which does not leave even the religious institution untouched. We see that the Cardinal, Monticelso, who is as white a devil as Vittoria, is elected Pope, and hence is assigned the most holy duty of the religious and social institution. The report that both Bracciano and Vittoria have fled, is sent to Monticelso, who with the newly vested authority, announces excommunication on both, without holding a trial. Besides, all the property belonging to Vittoria and Bracciano has been confiscated. This act of excommunication by Monticelso is a miniature repetition of Vittoria's trial scene. The only difference is that the facade of the judicial procedure is maintained in the trial scene whereas it has been thrown overboard in the present situation of Monticelso's arrogant authoritarianism.

As we have mentioned earlier, Monticelso and Francisco distrusted each other. Now Monticelso makes querries about Lodovico's release. Monticelso asks Lodovico about the machinations of Francisco. But Lodovico, as clever enough he is, does not reveal the secret of the plot because he, too, is a participant in it. Monticelso and Francisco though appearing mutually friendly, and trustful,

try their best to outwit each other in their manouevres. Fearful of Monticelso, lest he should be excommunicated, Lodovico almost changes his mind not to participate in the evil plot of Francisco. But soon to guile Lodovico, Monticelso sends a reward of a thousand ducats, symbolizing a green signal to his projected path of destruction. The sending of this reward to Lodovico is meant to serve two purposes. First, it will enable Lodovico to assist Francisco unhesitatingly, and secondly Monticelso's image in Francisco's mind will faint as Lodovico comments:

> .... He rail'd upon me;
> And yet these crowns were told out and laid ready,
> Before he knew my voyage. O the art,
> The modest form of greatness! that do sit
> Like bridges at wedding dinners, with their looks turn'd.
> From the least wanton jests, their puling stomach
> Sick of the modesty, when their thoughts are loose.[57]

Thus the plot of destroying each other moves pretty fast and our suspense is correspondingly intensified in the manner of a conventionally well built up structure of a play of intrigue.

The final Act is a continuation of the preceding Act in as much as it further develops the destructive strategies

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57. Ibid., pp.88-89.

hatched earlier. The very opening speech of Flamineo, after Bracciano's reconciliation with Vittoria, shows his complacent optimism: "This marriage confirms me happy." But his optimism is ironical as his judgement of the character of the Moor is misplaced:

> I have not seen a goodlier personage,
> Nor ever talk'd with man better experienc'd
> In state affairs or rudiments of war.[58]

The idea of pleasing appearance hiding inner rottenness is made clear again. Even the most cunning Flamineo does not recognize Francisco who has come in disguise of a Moor to serve Bracciano. Zanche falls in love with the Moor because of her strong sexual attraction towards him, the dramatic function of which is made clear later. There is a devastating irony in Bracciano's welcoming the Moor as the Trojans did the Grecian Horse and requesting his presence at the festivity to mark Bracciano's union with Vittoria and to witness a "fight at barriers."

Bracciano's arrangement for the "fight at barriers"as a kind of sport is followed ironically by the entry of Carlo, one of Francisco's train, who welcomes Bracciano to his own ruin. Lodovico suggests this:

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58. Ibid., p.89.

> T' have poison'd his prayer book, or a pair of beads,
> The pommel of his saddle, his looking-glass,
> Or th' handle of his racket.[59]

Before the fight begins Marcello meets Flamineo with Zanche. Marcello does not like her amorous talks with Flamineo and opposes it, but Flamineo would not rebuke Zanche and will continue to love her because it has been for a politic reason and not for any genuine, lustful, or matrimonial concern. He clarifies it as follows:

> .... I do love that Moor, that witch, very constrainedly: she knows some of my villainy. I do love her, just as a man holds a wolf by the ears: but for fear of turning upon me and pulling out my throat, I would let her go to the devil.[60]

> 'Faith, I made to her some such dark promise, and in seeking to fly from 't I run on, like a frighted dog with a bottle at's tail, that fain would bite it off and yet dares not look behind him.[61]

The theme of deceitful promise and reward is well defined by Flamineo himself, who is the greatest agent of evil in the play. He frankly reveals it to the foolish Zanche:

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59. Ibid., p.92.
60. Ibid., p.95.
61. Ibid.

> Lovers' oaths are like mariners' prayers, uttered in extremity; but when the tempest is o'er, and that the vessel leaves tumbling they fall from protesting to drinking.[62]

But Marcello is not satisfied with these clarifications and even challenges Flamineo to fight. The object of quarrel now shifts ironically from Zanche to the disguised Moore, with whom the former had fallen in love earlier in the scene. Cornelia, who had been listening to all these amorous promises, could not keep her silence and breaks out and strikes Zanche. Marcello joins hands with Cornelia. This makes Flamineo angry and he swears to fight him with sword. The scene ends with a destructive and lustful foreboding as Zanche, who was kicked a little earlier by Cornelia for her lustful affairs with Flamineo, now tries to trap in the disguised Moor, who, too, is not a sincere lover; but he wants to exploit her lustful inclinations for his ulterior strategies again: "Of all intelligence this may prove the best/ Sure I shall draw strange fowl, from this foul nest."

The next situation opens with Cornelia who has heard about whispering of Marcello's fight with Flamineo. Marcello pretends and tries to satisfy her by telling some events

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62. Ibid., pp.95-96.

of his childhood. His mentioning the images of the 'crucifix' is soon followed by action as Flamineo runs him through with his sword. Marcello's last utterance before death seems to envision some vague higher power but it is deliberately overshadowed by his sublunary perception expressed proverbially:

> There are some sins which heaven doth duly punish
> In a whole family. This it is to rise
> By all dishonest means. Let all men know,
> That tree shall long time keep a steady foot
> Whose branches spread no wider than the root.[63]

Bracciano comes to know of Marcello's murder by Flamineo and charges him with homicide. At this juncture he gets the right opportunity to get rid of Flamineo because the latter alongwith Vittoria had threatened him in the house of convertites. We notice here Cornelia's maternal love for her children even when one has murdered the other. She lies to Bracciano when she says that Marcello is not killed by Flamineo. She does this because "One arrow's graz'd already, it were vain/ T' lose this, for that will never be found again." However, Bracciano would not let Flamineo be at large to remain as a potent threat to him:

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63. Ibid., p.99.

> Hark you, I will not grant you pardon....
> .... only a lease of your life. And that shall last
> But for one day. Thou shalt be forc'd each evening
> To renew it, or be hang'd.[64]

The images of poison, intrigue, and destruction, mentioned above are followed by treacherous action as Lodovico has already poisoned Bracciano's helmet. Before the "fight at barriers" begins, Bracciano falls into pain due to the poisoning of his helmet. Physicians are called but their treatment is of no avail and this makes Bracciano foresee his doom:

> O, I am gone already: the infection
> Flies to the brain and heart. O thou strong heart!
> There's such a covenant 'tween the world and it,
> They're loth to break.[65]

Flamineo's earlier narrated anecdote about the barber surgeon is concretised and prophetically realised here. Towards the end of his life, Bracciano comes to know the futility of the worldly authority:

> Most corrupted politic hangman!
> You kill without book; but your art to save
> Fails you as great men's needy friends,

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64. Ibid., p.101.
65. Ibid., p.102.

I that have given life to offending slaves,
And wretched murderers, have I not power,
To lengthen mine own a twelve month?[66]

Though Bracciano knows well that "there are some great ones that have hand in this," and "this unction is sent from the Duke of Florence", but near his end, he is not able to answer to the enemy. The images of the 'hoarse wolf' "the dull owl" and the 'rough beared comet' does point out Bracciano's vision of life at his death. Unlike a tragic hero, Bracciano fears death. His last speeches and feelings enable us to look at the life he has been leading. His distracted behaviours - and in this his commenting truly on the evil characters - sum up his own career. His comments, in his distraction, on Flamineo and the Lawyer are subtly ironical and keep him firmly tied down to the lower realities of life:

See, see, Flamineo that kill'd his brother
Is dancing on the ropes there: and he carries
A money-bag in each hand, to keep him even
For fear of breaking's neck. And there's a lawyer
In a gown whipt with velvet, stares and gapes
When the money will fall. How the rogue cuts capers.[67]

He ridicules Vittoria also:

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66. Ibid., p.103.
67. Ibid., p.106.

> .... Her hair is sprinkled with arras powder,
> That makes her look as if she had sinn'd in the pastry.[68]

Bracciano continues his satiric commentary on every part of the society before he dies. The corrupt religious persons who do not hesitate even in murdering both innocents and criminals are envisioned as "gray rats that have lost their tails, and crawl up the pillow." It is immediately followed by Lodovico and Gasparo, disguised as Capuchins, who, when seeing the effect of poison somewhat weak, strangle Bracciano to ensure his end with a "true love knot." Before Bracciano dies, Flamineo comments satirically as if in a distracted manner:

> .... What solitariness is about dying princes. As heretofore they have unpeopled towns, divorce'd friends, and made great houses unhospitable: so now, O justice! where are their flatterers now? Flatterers are but the shadows of princes' bodies, the least thick cloud makes them invisible.[69]

It is needful here to comment on the various moves that surrounded Bracciano's horrible death. First of all Flamineo's sharing hands with Mulinassar (whose identity is still uncertain) and his drifting away from Bracciano with

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68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., pp. 103-104.

satirical commentaries is a kind of exposition of the socially, ethically, and morally corrupt world. Secondly, the horrible murder of Bracciano by Lodovico and Gasparo (disguised as religious persons) and their mocking at this juncture in a foreign tongue pretended to console the departing soul, is a gross prostitution of religion. Finally, the true nature of the world of The White Devil is summed up by Vittoria's exclamatory speech "O me this place is hell."

A fresh regrouping of the main characters, after Bracciano's death, is visible here. Flamieno, who was with Vittoria, now joins Francisco with his beloved Zanche, whom he keeps with himself only to manipulate situations in his favour. Webster presents here Flamineo as a participant in the action as well as a satiric commentator as he dotes upon women for their fickleness, change of emotions, and lack of loyalty and ironically comments on this in general:

> Had women navigable rivers in their eyes
> They would dispend them all; surely I wonder
> Why we should wish more rivers to the city,
> When they sell water so good cheap, I'll tell thee,
> These are but moonish shades of grief or fears,
> There's nothing sooner dry than women's tears.
> Why here's an end of all my harvest, he has given me nothing.
> Court promises: Let wise men count them curst,

For while you live he that scores best pays worst.[70]

Webster manipulates a distancing effect by Flamineo's long explication of women's inner rottenness before the next shipwreck occurs. The same device is again brought in by Zanche who talks lascivously and in a flirting manner to Mulinassar (disguised Francisco). To impress upon and tempt Francisco, she discloses the secret of Isabella's murder and Camillo's death. It gives a new turn to the action of the play which is hinted at by Lodovico. "The bed of snakes is broke." Before the situation follows the new move, Zanche reveals her own evil nature to avenge on the two murders. She would like to rob Vittoria of her valuables which the latter received from Bracciano.

The next situation opens with Flamineo who, after Bracciano's death has simulated melancholy. In fact, Bracciano's death has brought a shipwreck on him and he feels himself somewhat despaired because his hope for reward has almost been smashed. His habit of melancholy is darkened by Giovanni who starts hating Flamineo and the latter knows it well. Giovanni bans Flamineo's entry into his presence chamber. The latter's cruel nature and hardship is juxtaposed as we meet Cornelia who is prophetically mourning over the dead body of Marcello. In

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70. Ibid., p.110.

fact, Cornellia's mourning is pitiable. At her pathetic mourning it seems as if a pricking of the conscience is taking place inside Flamineo's soul. He says,

> I have a strange thing in me, to the which
> I cannot give a name, without it be
> Compassion.[71]

But this qualm of conscience is rather shaky and too feeble to work out any development in Flamineo's character because he does not learn anything from the pricking of his conscience. As he is meditating over Marcello's death there appears the ghost of Bracciano which makes him frightened. The ghost's showing Flamineo the skull foretells his doomed future. Even here Flamineo dares defy the higher perception:

> .... I do dare my fate
> To do its worst. Now to my sister's lodging,
> And sum up all these horrors: the disgrace,
> The prince threw on me; next the piteous sight
> Of my dead brother; and my mother's dotage;
> And last this terrible vision. All these
> Shall with Vittoria's bounty turn to good,
> Or I will drown this weapon in her blood.[72]

In a brief scene Lodovico takes responsibility and tells

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71. Ibid., p. 117.

72. Ibid., p. 119.

Francisco that he would alone finish Flamineo, Vittoria, and the flirt Zanche.

In the final situation Flamineo tries his last hope to get a reward from Vittoria because she is Bracciano's "executrix." But Vittoria would not do so. She says, "I give that portion to thee, and no other which Cain groan'd under having slain his brother." This makes Flamineo lose the last hope and he threatens to ruin her. She, in turn, does the same. Their plan to destroy each other appears less convincing and unimpressive. Flamineo's pretending to be wounded near his death does not have much dramatic value, but it brings out women's ingratitude which Flamineo satirizes:

> .... O Men
> That lie upon your death-beds and are haunted
> With howling wives, ne'er trust them: they'll remarry
> Ere the worm pierce your winding sheet.[73]

Vittoria cries for help and before any harm could be done, Lodovico overtakes them. Lodovico enters Vittoria's room with the help of a false key. The Flamineo - Vittoria tragic horse-play is stopped by Gasparo and Lodovico, who throw their disguise and stand in their true forms. Vittoria

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73. Ibid., p. 126.

foresees her doom and cries, "we are lost." Before his death Flamineo, too, comes to realize the true role of Fate:

> .... Fate's a spaniel,
> We cannot beat it from us. What remains now?
> Let all that do ill take this precedent;
> Many may his fate foresee, but not prevent,
> And of all anxioms this shall win the prize;
> 'Tis better to be fortunate than wise.[74]

Though Flamineo accepts death as a "long-silence" yet his perception is neither clear nor does it sound valid:

> Let all that belong to great men remember th' old Wives' tradition, to be like the lions I'th' Tower on Candlemas day; to mourn if the sun shine, for fear of the pitiful remainder of winter to come.[75]

Nevertheless, Flamineo dies with a courageous spirit as is seen clearly from his dying speeches. But Vittoria's facing death shines more brightly. She calls her murderers "You my deathsman! /Me thinks thou dost not look horried enough, Thou hast too good a face to be a hangman." Though she faces all the shipwrecks and bears earthquakes, she never loses her balance of mind as is shown by the Duchess of Malfi. But like the latter, Vittoria is not allowed to have a higher perception:

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74. Ibid., p. 127.
75. Ibid., p. 130.

O my greatest sin lay in my blood,
Now my blood pays for't.[76]

My soul, like to a ship in a black storm,
Is driven I know not whither.[77]

Thus we see that the play, as a tragical satire, ends with all the evil characters dying without having any higher perception. It confirms the dramatist's unhindered presentation of the operation of evil in the world of his play. Giovanni appears at the end as a restoring factor and he tries to wipe away the evil completely, yet it cannot be said that the evil will be wiped away because Giovanni himself belongs to the same evil and corrupt family of Bracciano, the foul Duke and above all the same milieu.

Though Lodovico and Gasparo are not killed but are punished severely, Monticelso, a very strong element in destructive plans remains alive. It confirms that Webster's aim is not to point out the complete wiping out of evil. In Shakespeare both evil and good are destroyed, and particularly evil is destroyed completely in his tragedies. But in Webster's play, evil remains alive to raise its head once again when the opportunity falls. At least in The Duchess of Malfi, Webster could realise his fault of his first tragedy, and wiped away evil completely.

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76. Ibid., p. 129.
77. Ibid.

CHAPTER III

THE DUCHESS OF MALFI

The Duchess of Malfi is the second major specimen of a tragical satire written by John Webster. The dramatic devices and patterns followed in a tragical satire are mostly the same as in The White Devil. The play presents sufferings, deaths, treacherous intrigues and uses satirical commentators. Though it has got repetitive echoes from the earlier play, but as a mature play of Webster, it is superior to The White Devil in respect of the author's artistry and mellowness of vision. Webster uses various moods, situations, and motives in order to satirically expose the rottenness of the contemporary society which the play purports to deal with. But the satiric sting does not undermine the artistic merits of the play.

A good deal of work has already been done by recent scholars, like Boklund, on the various sources of the play.[1] Bandello's novella and Lope de Vega's El Mayordomo de la Duquesa de Amalfi are some of the possible sources. But uncertainty about Webster's classical knowledge compels us to think over these far-feteched sources pertaining to the Italian origin. In fact, like the earlier play,

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1. The Duchess of Malfi: Source, Themes, Characters (Cambridge Univ. Press, Mass., 1962), pp.17-35.

The Duchess of Malfi, too, seems to contain historical facts of the contemporary English court life which was "infested with intelligencers, hired assassins and sexual trafficking for preferment."[2] Life at the Italian court, too, had similar corruptions. Therefore Webster's acute observation of the reality of the English court life must have found corroboration in stories dealing with Italian court corruptions, which the Elizabethans relished to read and see staged through drama.[3]

As a tragical satire, The Duchess of Malfi comprises characteristics both of tragedy and satire. The story of the play is like this: the husband of the Duchess has died in her prime youth. Her two brothers, Ferdinand and the Cardinal, forewarn her against re-marriage. But violating the prevalent customs and ignoring her brothers' warning she gets married secretely to Antonio, a steward of her household, who is much below her rank. This makes the two brothers infuriated and they plan to torture her mercilessly. They not only destroy her but also her children and husband. In the process of their destructive

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2. Jonathan Dollimore & Alan Sinfield, eds.; The Selected Plays of John Webster (Cambridge Univ. Press, London, 1983), p.3.

3. George Whetstone's Heptameron of Civil Discourses (1582) contains the story of a Cardinal, condemned as a tyrant for revenging the choice by his sister of a person of lower status as her husband.

plans the brothers, too, alongwith their agents are destroyed.

Many a critic have criticised Webster for vagueness of motives in the action of The Duchess of Malfi. Webster has also been criticised for presenting a centreless world lacking in moral perspective. But our analysis below will demonstrate that these superficially observed deficiencies are deliberately adopted by Webster for a deep and psychological probing into the innerself of the chief participants and not out of ignorance. Webster has strongly asserted in the preface to the play that "willingly, and not ignorantly, in this kind have I faulted."[4]

The very opening of the play introduces the chief moods and concerns of the play. As we will see later, the play deals with the centreless, corrupt, and chaotic world, where whims, traditional codes of honour, marriage and prestige, alongwith social taboos are the chief concerns of the leading individuals. The theme of preferment and self-advancement is one of the chief concerns of the play, as it was with The White Devil. And for this even persons holding high places do not hesitate to get involved, stooping to the abysmal level of flouting values. The court

4. Jonathan Dollimore & Alan Sinfield, The Duchess of Malfi, op.cit., p.7.
All subsequent textual references are to this edition of play.

which is the seat of civil administration turns out to be a place where treacherous intrigues and several other conspiracies are hatched in order to gull both the evil and the innocent.

The play opens with two friends, Antonio and Delio, who are preparing to participate in the assembly to be held in the Duchess's presence-chamber. Before the other participants arrive on the scene, Antonio, a steward to the Duchess's household, gets an opportunity to describe his personal experience at the French court, from where he has recently returned. Antonio's precise and brief description of the ideal French Court is intended to present the court conditions at Amalfi through contrast. Antonio admires the policy of the French ruler, which is most violently perverted in the world of Amalfi:

> In seeking to reduce both state and people
> To a fix'd order, their judicious king
> Begins at home: quits first his royal palace,
> Of flatt'ring sycophants, of dissolute
> And infamous persons - which he sweetly terms
> His Master's master-piece, the work of heaven
> Consid'ring duly, that a prince's court
> Is like a common fountain, whence should flow
> Pure silver-drops in general; but if 't chance
> Some curs'd example poison't near the head,
> Death and disease through the whole land spread.[5]

5. Ibid., p.143.

As the participants start coming one after the other, during Antonio's description of the French Court, Antonio catches sight of Bosola "the only court gall." Bosola's character is aptly perceived by Antonio:

> .... I observe his railing
> Is not for simple love of piety;
> Indeed, he rails at those things which he wants,
> Would be as lecherous, covetous, or proud,
> Bloody, or envious, as any man,
> If he had means to do so.[6]

The next man presented on the stage is the Cardinal. His conversation with Bosola, which interrupts Antonio's commentary, makes the above description of the latter's character clear. The Cardinal and Bosola indulge in an altercation and mutual accusation when the latter asks the former for reward due to him for the past services he has rendered to the Cardinal. On the Cardinal's denying Bosola the reward promised to him, the latter tries to satirically expose the wicked and vicious nature of the Cardinal as well as his brother who is not different from him:

> He and his brother are like plum trees that grow crooked over standing pools: they are rich and o'erladen with fruit, but none but crows, pies, and caterpillars feed on them. Could I be one of their flatt'ring panders, I would hang on their ears like a horse-leech till I were full, and then drop off.[7]

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6. Ibid., pp.143-144.
7. Ibid.

The above description presents Bosola both as a dramatic character and a satiric commentator. He is a dramatic character because the expression of his feelings in the above lines is motivated by his frustration in serving the exploitative and selfish masters like the Cardinal and Ferdinand. This is a part of the main action of the play in which Bosola has to play his own role. He is a satiric commentator because through his images and objectivity in the commentary he acquires a certain degree of detachment from the immediate action. Bosola, in describing the two wicked brothers, uses images of ruin, fall, exploitation, selfishness etc. Bosola in his satiric commentary proceeds from his lashing at the individual to the general state of corruption in the entire state. This contributes to his detachment which is required of a commentator in a tragical satire. It is Webster's characteristic manner to make his satiric commentator start from the particular and conclude with the general. It is worth noting that Bosola's use of images also helps his own self-portrayal. His use of the image of the horse-leech in the above quoted extract is an example of this.

As contrasted with Bosola in the opening situation of the play, there is no ambiguity in Antonio's role as a typical satiric commentator. Antonio's attitude is characterized by objectivity, lack of prejudice, and non

self-involvement whereas Bosola's commentary smacks of his personal grudge with the characters who come within his satiric scrutiny. For example, Antonio does not ignore the good points in Bosola's character in the following sketch whereas, as we have seen above, Bosola harps only on the evil points in the character of the Cardinal and Ferdinand:

> .... I have heard
> He's very valiant. This foul melancholy
> Will poison all his goodness....[8]

Thus the first situation is in the nature of preparing the audience's response to the ensuing action. It also serves to keep the moral perspective of the audience clear from the very beginning to avoid any confusion in his mind in its wading through the quagmire of contradictions, paradoxes, and topsy-turvicalness of values. Thus to say that Webster's The Duchess of Malfi presents a world where the moral perspective of the audience remains ambiguous is not true.

The second situation opens with Ferdinand at ease with his sycophants. This, through a contrast with what a Prince at the French Court is like in Antonio's perception, throws ample light on the morally fickle character of Ferdinand. Antonio becomes more direct in his commentary

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8. Ibid., p. 145.

on the evil nature of Ferdinand which suppliments the oblique hint of it in his being attended on by his sycophants:

> The Duke there? a most perverse, and turbulent nature;
> What appears in him mirth, is merely outside;
> If he laughs heartily, it is to laugh
> All honesty out of fashion.[9]

> He speaks with other's tongues, and hears men's suits
> With others' ears, will seem to sleep o'th bench
> Only to entrap offenders in their answers;
> Dooms men to death by information.
> Rewards by hearsay.[10]

> He ne'er pays debts, unless they be shrewd turns,
> And those he will confess that he doth owe.[11]

Similarly the Cardinal who has already been partly portrayed in absentia, a little earlier, is brought under further satirical scrutiny when he is espied approaching by Antonio:

> .... he is a melancholy churchman. The spring in his face is nothing but the engend'ring of toads; where he is jealous of any man, he lays worse plots for them than ever was imposed on Hercules, for he strews in his way

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9. Ibid., p.149.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.

> flatterers, panders, intelligencers, atheists and a thousand such political monsters.[12]

> They that do flatter him say oracles
> Hang at his lips - and verily I believe them,
> For the devil speaks in them.[13]

We see the same objectivity in Antonio's description of the Duchess which, though hyperbolically appreciative, is not motivated by any personal preference. This is so because Antonio at this stage does not have any wind whatsoever of the Duchess's matrimonial intention which we come to know later. To him the Duchess is as follows:

> But for their sister, the right noble duchess:
> You never fixed your eye on three fair medals,
> Cast in one figure, of so different temper.
> For her discourse, it is so full of rapture,
> You only will begin then to be sorry
> When she doth end speech; and wish, in wonder.
> She held it less vainglory to talk much
> Than you penance to hear her: whilst she speaks.
> She throws upon a man so sweet a look
> That it were able to raise one to a galliard
> .... I'll case the picture up - only thus much:
> .... She stains the time past, lights the time to come.[14]

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12. Ibid., p. 148.
13. Ibid., p. 149.
14. Ibid.

The device of figure-in-speech followed by figure-in-action to achieve economy and pace in the action is discernible in the present situation. For example, we see that the admiring speech of Antonio is immediately followed in action when the Duchess's maid, Cariola, asks Antonio to "attend my lady in the gallery/Some half an hour hence." But before Antonio could attend to the Duchess, Ferdinand and the Cardinal appear on the stage and because they are to leave Amalfi soon, they appoint Bosola as a provisor of the Duchess's stable. The Cardinal's intention in this is quite clear:

> .... I would not be seen in't,
> And therefore many times I have slighted him
> When he did court our furtherance, as this morning.[15]

Bosola is clever enough to ask the two brothers in response to their offer of gold to him:

> So:
>
> What follows? Never rain'd such showers as these
> without thunder-bolts i'th' tail of them
> Whose throat must I cut?[16]

Ferdinand is ruthlessly brusque in warning Bosola against his curiosity about this charity in offering him gold. He

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15. Ibid., p. 151.
16. Ibid., p.152.

only, in an autocratic manner, tells him that he has to stay in the Duchess's palace as a Provisor of her stable so that he can have an eye on her, because he does not want her to marry again. He forbids him from asking anything in this regard. Though Ferdinand's withholding his motive does not bother Bosola because he is a professional hireling, it does leave the audience puzzled and guessing. Bosola's response is as expected:

> ....these curs'd gifts would make
> You a corrupter, me an impudent traitor;
> And should I take these they'd take me to hell.[17]

The Cardinal's argument against re-marriage is understandable in the context of the current social taboos and is conveyed in a reasonably balanced language. But Ferdinand's protestations which are harsh, even illogical and full of sexual innuendos remain ambiguous. Some of the images of sexuality and lust given below will prove the cause of our puzzlement: "Women like that part, which (like the lamprey)/Hath never bone in't", and his final "Farewell lusty widow," "tainting of blood," etc.

The next situation is full of ironical reversals which propel the action to move fast with suspense about its

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17. Ibid.

conclusion. Immediately after the brother's warning, she confidently decides to marry:

> Shall this move me? If all my royal kindred
> Lay in my way into this marriage,
> I'd make them my low foot-steps.[18]

The Duchess's amorous images are followed in action as Antonio puts in his appearance in compliance with her instruction sent to him earlier. But before she frankly reveals the marriage proposal to Antonio, Cariola's use of contrasted images forebodes disruption in their proposed marriage. Cariola says "Both shall be safe" with "trade in poison." Even the Duchess herself perceives it, though unconsciously:

> .... wish me good speed,
> For I am going into a wilderness,
> Where I shall find nor path nor friendly clew
> To be my guide.[19]

Cariola acts as a witness to the secret marriage of the Duchess. The Duchess's amorous talking to the rather non-plussed Antonio continues for some time. Though this situation, as presented in the text, does not explain

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18. Ibid., p. 155.
19. Ibid., p. 156.

Antonio's foreknowledge of the Duchess's intention but he does not get surprised at her wooing him. Prior to this the two different descriptions of the Duchess by Antonio and Ferdinand tell us that she is virtuous as well as potentially sensuous. These wooing scenes are in the nature of figures-in-action and the two above described characteristics of the Duchess are fused in this scene. Even in this happy situation the invisible presence of evil is realised in Antonio's sense of fear and of his unworthiness which subtly forebodes ill in the matrimonial union: "O my unworthiness" and "he's a fool/That beeing a-cold, would thrust his hands in th' fire/To warm them." As a satirical commentator, Antonio is quite confident and eloquent but in the present amorous situation he fumbles, gets confused, and is quite often frightened. This clearly hints that Antonio as a participant in the action may be involuntarily caught in the web of evil and suffer. But if he remains detached he might be safe. The predicament of Antonio and his like in a world like that of Amalfi is that they cannot escape the compulsive clutches of evil.

Throughout this idyllic courtship of Antonio and the Duchess there is a frequent use of sexual images (blood, cold, starkblind, circumference, Quietus est with kisses, stillness in motion of the spheres, loving palms etc.) and images pertaining to death, terror, and destruction, (of

devil's dancing in the circle, ambitions, and thrusting cold hands in the fire to warm them) which introduce an uncertainty in the future course of the action. Towards the end of Act one Antonio's "leading his fortune unto the marriage bed" is chorically commented upon by Cariola and her commentary foretells the disasterous move the action is going to follow:

> Whether the spirit of greatness or of woman
> Reign most in her, I know not, but it shows
> A fearful madness; I owe her much of pity.[20]

The plot has already acquired considerable complexity by the end of the first Act. In the subsequent Acts these complexities are gradually resolved. The second Act deals mainly with Bosola's keeping a watch on the Duchess's activities and behaviour and to discover whom "she best affects." A few months after the Duchess's secret marriage, Bosola gets suspicious of her pregnancy. This is hinted at in the very opening scene of the second Act. Moreover, the mid-wife's presence on the stage confirms Bosola's suspicion. He, instead of interrogating her to know the truth about the situation, starts his satiric tirade on women who indulge in secretive activities:

> Man stands amaz'd to see his deformity
> In any other creature but himself,

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20. Ibid., p. 161.

> But in our own flesh, though we bear diseases
> Which have their true names only ta'en from beasts,
> As the most ulcerous wolf and swinish measle;
> Though we are eaten up of lice and worms,
> And though continually we bear about us
> A rotten and dead body, we delight
> To hide it in rich tissue...[21]

Bosola's language is full of images which are drawn from low life, beasts, insects, whores, etc. Here his criticism of the 'painted faces' of women is so vehement that one gets away with the impression of the authorial endorsement of it. The intrusion of the long satirical commentary, without apparent causal relationship, in the midst of the fast developing situation, certainly tends to stall the movement of the action. The main structural weakness of Webster's plays is his reluctance to resist the temptation of elaborating his satiric exposition, which sometimes transgresses the artistic exigenceis of a particular dramatic situation. Bosola's satiric tirade is interrupted by the entry of Delio and Antonio which provides the old lady an opportunity to slip out. Bosola's conversation with Delio in a melancholy mood brings out another point that Webster intends to convey which is that to be honest in a rotten society is almost impossible. In the midst of Bosola's surmonising to Delio

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21. Ibid., pp. 163-164.

the Duchess puts in her appearance on the stage with the mid-wife and other ladies which further strengthens Bosola's surmise of her pregnancy. The Duchess's own feeling, "your arm Antonio, do I not grow fat?/I am exceeding short-winded,"[22] gives a clue to her present condition. But Bosola would not stop here and to be certain he offers apricocks to the Duchess which she eats voraciously. This confirms Bosola's suspicion. But the identity of the Duchess's 'bawd' still remains unknown. Immediately after eating the apricocks the Duchess falls into labour. But the whole issue must be kept a secret lest Ferdinand's threat, voiced in the opening scene, should materialise in the destruction of the Duchess.

The next situation opens with the mid-wife rushing towards the Duchess's lodging. To conceal the secret, Delio suggests a false story to divert public attention from the Duchess's affair. Delio succeeds in his plan and temporarily saves the situation. Antonio rushes to get the horoscope of the newly born baby prepared. In the next situation Bosola, as a spy, is seen wandering around the Duchess's household in the "dead solitariness of night" to gather further intelligence about the Duchess. During his return journey from the astrologer, Antonio suddenly and

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22. Ibid., p. 165.

unexpectedly meets Bosola in the thick dark and silence of the night. He is naturally frightened by the apprehension that his secrets are out. But soon gathering courage, he faces Bosola boldly and threatens to punish him on the Duchess's authority for violating her instructions that every household worker is to remain closed up in his dwelling till the concocted story of the theft is resolved. During this confused, fearful situation Antonio drops the horoscope. Bosola collects it and, after reading it, comes to know that the nativity figure is of the Duchess's newly born child. He starts suspecting that "this precise fellow (Antonio) is the Duchess's bawd." Receiving this "parcel of intelligency" Bosola feels overjoyed, hoping that now he will be rewarded for his services. But he still needs to confirm the identity of the Duchess's lover.

The setting of the next situation is Rome where Castruchio is sent by Bosola to deliver the "parcel of intelligence to Ferdinand." Pretence and deception continue to be used as a means for evil practice. For example, Julia, who has reached Rome secretely to meet her lustful partner,the Cardinal deceives her own husband on the pretext that she is going "to visit an old anchorite/Here for devotion." But the lustful Cardinal, who has nothing to do with Julia except to use her for the satisfaction of his

lust, threatens the latter with the exposure to her husband of her lustful affairs with him. Julia's future is predicted in the Cardinal's image of "lightning" used to highlight the danger of her being curious about great men's affair. The Cardinal portrays himself in the image of a falconer:

> You may thank me, lady
> I have ta'en you off your melancholy perch,
> Bore you upon my fist and show'd you game,
> And let you fly at it.[23]

The lustful encounter between the Cardinal and Julia is interrupted by a servant who informs them that Julia's husband has arrived in Rome. Delio is also in Rome to discover whether Antonio's secret marriage with the Duchess is known to her brothers. To manipulate things in his favour he meets Julia and offers her money, because she being "close to the Cardinal" can bring secret news from the latter. But as Julia has a little earlier been strictly warned by the Cardinal, she will not further move him and will not pass any secret to Delio. Nevertheless, Delio comes to know that something has moved the two brothers highly.

The figure-in-speech is immediately followed by figure-in-action as we meet the two brothers, reading the

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23. Ibid., p.176.

letter, sent from Amalfi by Bosola about the Duchess's secret marriage. After reading the letter Ferdinand feels "I have this night digg d up a mandrake," and "am grown mad with it." But the Cardinal is not moved so violently and advises his brother not to react to the news in such a distracted manner. In a baffled and distracted mood Ferdinand sees his sister laughing as an "excellent hyena," and being "loose i'th' hilts," and "grown a notorious strumpet." Ferdinand's hallucinatory imagination is mixed with an intensity of passion as if he were sexually jealous of his sister's bed-partner. Ferdinand becomes almost mad with rage which leads him to a sort of paralytic effect upon his mind. In a hallucinatory vision he sees the Duchess with some "strong thigh'd bargeman" in the act of copulation. The Cardinal feels surprised at Ferdinand's behaviour: "How idly shows this rage ... are you stark-mad?" he exclaims. This is ironically prophetic because later Ferdinand does become mentally unhinged. But Webster continues to withhold the knowledge of the real motive of Ferdinand's behaviour from the reader. But we start suspecting Ferdinand's unconscious sexual involvement with his sister. His incestuous urge at the unconscious level is so powerful that it breaks forth in naked sexual images. Webster's keeping Ferdinand's motive unstated lends complexity to his character. Towards the end of the second

Act we notice a wide difference in the attitude of the two brothers towards the Duchess's secret marriage. We had seen in the very opening scene of the play that the two brothers had an identical argument about this social taboo. But in the present situation we notice that the Duchess's "unchastity" affects the two brothers entirely differently.

By the end of the second Act we see Ferdinand's outraging statements against the Duchess and Antonio as a foreboding to the next disastrous situation. Moreover his use of the destructive images - 'bodies burnt in a coal-pit', 'curs'd smoke', 'sheets dipped in pitch or sulpher', 'boiling the bastard' and 'lecherous father'- hint at the destructive future course of the Duchess's secret marriage with Antonio.

At the beginning of the third Act, Delio and Antonio are seen talking of the temporarily relieved situation. They think that the Duchess's secret has not yet been disclosed, even the Duchess has become the mother of two more children. The talk of Delio and Antonio, in a mood of complacency, is in the nature of the lull before a storm. It is further enhanced by Ferdinand's meeting with the Duchess wherein he hypocritically sympathises with her and proposes her to get married with Malateste. Here we notice that Ferdinand's marriage proposal for the Duchess is in

violation of the two brothers' earlier stand on a widow's remarriage. But through these contradictory plans Webster lets us see into the evil and rotten mischief which Ferdinand is going to enact in future. Bosola's brief conversation with Ferdinand about the function of the planets, the use of sorcery and herbal medicines, to trap a woman to lustful and amorous affection, deserves attention. We see that though Ferdinand rejects the superstitious existence of invisible things as a means to attain one's goal, he is unconsciously drawn towards it, which is indicated in his intent listening to Bosola's narrative. His complex intrigue to destroy the Duchess is further discernible when he asks Bosola to get a false key to the Duchess's closet.

Webster brings in the characteristic device of distancing in the tender courtship scene between the Duchess and Antonio, at the opening of the next situation. The lull is further prolonged through the Duchess's private encounter with Antonio which is full of amorous, tender, and cosmic images. His narration of the mythological anecdotes about coyness and cruelty in women is a further addition to the above mentioned device. The whole situation is full of amorous talking. Even Cariola, herself in a pleasant mood, calls Antonio's narrative a "vain story" and talks freely of Paris, Helen, and Paris's embarrasment at the sight of the "three amorous goddesses" in a "stark naked" position. The

Duchess's "when were we so marry - my hair tangles" makes the climax of the amorous situation set by Webster for the forthcoming calamities. The distancing situation is further prolonged as we notice that Antonio and Cariola in a joke slip out behind the arras leaving the Duchess talking with Antonio who, in reality, is Ferdinand. Ferdinand who secretly heard the Duchess's revelation of the proceedings of her married life and her hope to be forgiven by the two brothers actually appears when the lights are on. Even at this jucture, the Duchess does not lose the balance of her mind and boldly faces Ferdinand. She asserts that "Whether I am doom'd to live or die,/I can do both like a prince." The doom apparently follows as Ferdinand, coming out from behind the Duchess, gives her a poniard and asks her to commit suicide. Ferdinand's accusing the Duchess," thou art but a bare name,/And no essential thing" hints at the hiden irony in the title of the play. In such a violent situation, the Duchess's defensive moves and protestations do nothing but burden Ferdinand's sub-conscious mind with his own frustration in his incestuous attraction.

Ferdinand's incestuous inclination towards the Duchess is so powerful that he even identifies himself with the duchess's lover and in his intolerance asks her not to disclose the name of her lover. Ferdinand's controlled anger, in this situation, is in contrast with his earlier violent rage. It is somewhat

ambiguous because of the lack of an explicit clue from the text. This may be explained with reference to Ferdinand's earlier "palsy", which he mentioned in the previous Act when he was informed of the Duchess's giving birth to her first child. At that time 'palsy' was a stage of paralysis under the heavy incestuous passion. At the present stage it continues with the same meaning but a little later it worsens into lycanthropia, affecting both his mind and body.

Immediately after Ferdinand's exit, Antonio rushes in, infuriated against Cariola who, he thinks, has betrayed the Duchess and has enabled Ferdinand to get into the Duchess's bed chamber. But before he does any harm to Cariola, a knocking at the door brings in more "earthquakes." The Duchess also fears "I stand/As if a mine beneath my feet were ready, to be blown up." The figure-in-speech is immediately followed by figure-in-action and Bosola, the synonym of "earthquake" appears before Antonio. He tells the Duchess that before leaving for Rome, Ferdinand has announced her doom. The images of Bosola's "whirlwind" and "the dead of night" forebode the destructive course of the future action.

The Duchess tries to convince Bosola, pretending that Antonio has played false in dealing with accounts. But Bosola does not get easily befooled and remains determined to uncover the truth. The concocted story is brought into

action and the Duchess suggests Antonio to "fly to Ancona," so that he should happily lead the remaining life there. To make the public assured of Antonio's guilt, the Duchess charges him openely and rewards him with banishment. But Bosola is clever enough to get into the heart of this false story. He continues to play the Machiavellian villain and through a different trick compels the Duchess to confess the truth. Flattering the Duchess he praises Antonio's noble character and expresses his sorrow at his banishment, which makes the Duchess fall in favour of Bosola, "O you render me excellent music." Strongly charmed by Bosola's apparent sympathy for Antonio, the Duchess discloses that Antonio is her husband and she has three children by him. The simple Duchess "tastes comfort in this (Bosola's) friendly speech" and even asks for his assistance in her secret affairs. We notice here the Duchess's impulsive nature in choosing Bosola as her confidant and guide. The present movement of the action ends with Bosola's gloating over his success in extricating the Duchess's secrets which will ensure his reward from the Arragonian brothers. One significant point to note here is that in the world of the play virtue, too, has to take the shelter of evil for survival. The Duchess stoops to evil in falsely charging her own husband and later in seeking Bosola's guidance for survival. Webster's exploration of evil here has reached a new height in showing

the multi-pronged grasp of evil on life, which tends to create the mood of despair.

The next situation contributes little to the development of the main story of the play. However, it does throw light on the Cardinal's military career. Further the minor characters of the play make satiric commentary on the two brothers of the Duchess and portray them as salamander - like, deceptive, destructive, villainous, and vindictive. Here Ferdinand mentions a son of the Duchess by her former husband. Though later on Ferdinand forgets about him while he is analysing his own motive in destroying his sister. This reference is of great significance and will help us in understanding his nature and motives later in the play.

The succeeding situation deals with the instalment ceremony of the Cardinal, who with the newly invested authority, declares that he would get Antonio banished by the Duke of Ancona where the latter has now taken a shelter for security. Antonio's banishment and the Cardinal's instalment ceremony are presented through the conventional device of a dumb-show. The dumb-show brings economy as well as tightening to the structure of the play, and is one of the stock - devices of revenge plays and tragical satires.[24]

24. For further details see Dieter Mehl, The Elizabethan Dumb Show (Methuen, London,1965), pp.142-145.

The Duchess's doomed fate moves speedily towards destructive direction. Bosola shows a letter to the Duchess which is sent by Ferdinand asking "Antonio's head in a business /And as for his debts at Naples Ferdinand would "rather have Antonio's heart than his money." But both Antonio and the Duchess realise the danger hinted at in the letter. Antonio naturally does not comply with Ferdinand's requests or commands. The Duchess suggests to Antonio that he should leave for Milan with his eldest son. Antonio's realization at parting from the Duchess that "heaven hath a hand in't" makes us observe some reference to heaven, fate, or necessity. But it is too weak to act as a potent factor in the destructive drama of the play. The parting moments are full of pathetic and sentimental images. Besides, the couple's feeling "Heaven fashion'd us of nothing; and we strive/To bring ourselves to nothing," and "your kiss is colder/Than I have seen an holy anchorite/Given to a dead man's skull," is a sort of realization of their doomed future which prophetically becomes true.

The Duchess now realising the irreversibility of her tragic situation is in a mood to welcome death. The figure-in-speech is followed in figure-in-action as we see Bosola coming with armed guards whom the Duchess receives courageously:

O, they are very welcome:
When Fortune's wheel is over-charg'd with princes,
The weight makes it move swift; I would have my ruin.[25]

Bosola's threat of death does not unnerve the bold Duchess. Though he has come this time not to kill her but to inform her of Ferdinand's plan to meet her secretly in her own closet, the wise Duchess knows that her brother's visit cannot be without an evil motivation. The third Act comes to an end with the Duchess's narration of the anecdote of the "dog-fish" and 'salmon,' caught in the same net which brings a kind of ominous calm to the situation. The Act ends with a philosophic speech of the Duchess which propels the important movement of the action in the next Act:

So, to great men, the moral may be stretched:
Men oft are valued high, when th' are most wretched.
But come: Whither you please. I am arm'd 'gainst misery:
Bent to all ways of the oppressor's will.
There's no deep valley, but near some great hill.[26]

With the opening of Act IV we observe a noticeable change in Bosola's attitude towards the Duchess for whom he had acted as an element of torture in the last Act. Bosola

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25. Ibid., p. 205.

26. Ibid., p. 207.

admires the stoic endurance of the Duchess in the prison:

> She's sad, as one long us'd to't: and she seems
> Rather to welcome the end of misery
> Then shun it: a behaviour so noble,
> As gives a majesty to adversity.
> You may discern the shape of loveliness
> More perfect in her tears, than in her smiles;
> She will muse four hours together, and her silence,
> Methinks, expresseth more than if she spake.[27]

But the way Bosola is irretrievably caught in the web of evil machinations, the flow of his sympathy for the Duchess is not going to help the latter. In accordance with Ferdinand's message to the Duchess all the lights are removed and Ferdinand enters the Duchess's bed-chamber in the dark. His commentary, "This darkness suits you well," shows his monolithic nature of evil incarnate. Soon after Ferdinand's departure, the Duchess discovers the artificial wax figures of Antonio and her three children left by Ferdinand to horrify her as well as to apprise her of the fact that her husband and children are done in. The Duchess falls in a state of terrible despair. She has lost all interest in life. But her intolerable predicament is that she is compelled to live: "the greatest torture souls feel in hell,/In hell: that they must live, and cannot die." The

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27. Ibid.

Duchess envisioning Amalfi as hell further thickens the increasing gloom of the dramatic world. Bosola tries to console the Duchess: "the Bee/when he hath shot his sting into your hand/May then play with your eye-lid." But in the present context of her psychological state it has no meaningful efficacy. However, Bosola's attempt at consoling her shows that his earlier sympathy for her has not died out. The Duchess perceives a vision which transcends her personal predicament: "this world's a tedious theatre,/For I do play a part in't 'gainst my will." She despairs at her helplessness and in her intolerable agony tries to curse the stars. To her curses Bosola opposes his most realistic retort: "Look you, the stars shine still." He conveys to her the idea of the inexorable operation of the forces governing human existence.

Ferdinand gloats over his successfully torturing the Duchess through various moves but Bosola is not interested in it any further. He asks Ferdinand to "end here:/And go no farther in your cruelty." Bosola's arguments are of no avail and he is again compelled by the unrelenting Ferdinand to further torture the Duchess. Nevertheless, Bosola does all this, "much against his will" merely for the sake of self advancement and preferment. The Duchess faces more earthquakes and the howling madmen are placed beside her residence.

The Duchess does not lose balance of her mind even in the midst of all this howling and threatening. Rather she feels that "noise and folly/can keep me in my right wits, whereas reason/ And silence make me stark mad." Her stoic endurance is admirable indeed. She asserts with perfect equanimity of mind:

> I'll tell thee a miracle
> I am not mad yet, to my cause of sorrow.
> Th' heaven o'er my head seems made of molten brass,
> The earth of Flaming sulphur, yet I am not mad.
> I am acquainted with sad misery
> As the tann'd galley-slave is with his oar;
> Necessity makes me suffer constantly,
> And custom makes it easy.[28]

The Duchess increasingly realises that man's sufferings are caused by some superior power. But Webster's envisioning of this force is not dramatically worked out. The Duchess's reference to "necessity" "custom" and being "chained to endure" suffering is more a pointer to human agency and social rottenness as a contributing factor than to the hand of heaven.

Bosola now comes in to get the Duchess finally done in. His philosophic summarising of the mortality of human

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28. Ibid., p.214.

body to which soul is bound is meant to mentally prepare the Duchess to welcome death as a redeemer of soul. But this banal, axiomatic moralising exposes Bosola's pretensions more than it performs the function he intends it to do. One thing is to be noticed here and that is,like Vittoria, the Duchess does not get frightened and faces the murderers boldly. She does not die in a mist like Vittoria. She rather perceives a glimpse of heaven in her death: "who would be afraid on't / knowing to meet such excellent company/ In the other world." Bosola's "Doth not death frighten you?" and "This Cord should terrify you" does not unnerve the Duchess. On the contrary her long suffering brings to her a transcendental calm and humility:

> Pull, and pull strongly, for your able strength
> Must pull down heaven upon me-
> Yet stay, heaven-gates are not so highly arch'd
> As princes' palaces: they that enter there
> Must go upon their knees. Come violent death,
> Serve for Mandragora to make me sleep![29]

It is relevant to recall here Cornelia's cowardly facing death. She cowers at the sight of death: "I am not prepar'd for't; I will not die." This by contrast makes the Duchess's courageously facing death more heroic and admirable.

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29. Ibid., p.221.

Eventually the executioners strangle the Duchess alongwith her three children. Though Bosola has strangled the Duchess and Cariola, he begs of Ferdinand to show pity to the children: "here begin your pity." But the adamant Ferdinand does not relent and says "The death of young wolves is never to be pitied." Moreover, Ferdinand's strong sexual desire for his sister is recalled here when he sees the murdered Duchess's face and cries: "Cover her face! mine eyes dazzle: she died young." But to suppress this Ferdinand tries to rationalise the causes of the entire process of the catastrophe:

> For let me but examine well the cause;
> What was the meanness of her match to me?
> Only I must confess, I had a hope,
> Had she continu'd window, to have gain'd
> An infinite mass of treasure by her death:
> And that was the main cause.[30]

Ferdinand here presents his revenge motif as a rationalization of his behaviour and calls the whole tragic situation as a conflict "Between her innocence and my revenge." But this revenge motif is unconvincing because Ferdinand has already mentioned that the Duchess had a son by her former husband. Thus he could have never hoped to inherit his

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30. Ibid., p.223.

sister's property after her death. In fact his rationalisation is but a cover on his incestuous inclination towards his sister which has already been mentioned. The movement of the action becomes more complicated as Ferdinand denies reward and preferment to Bosola for his murdering the Duchess and her three children. Instead, Bosola is charged with the murders and for this he will only get "pardon/For this murder." But Bosola now has nothing to do with Ferdinand's rationalization, and sticks to the demand of reward, "I will first receive my pension." Bosola's satiric commentary on the "ceremonial form of law" is pertinent to recall here: The office of justice is perverted quite when one thief hangs another: who shall dare/To reveal this?"[31] Ferdinand's denial of preferment to Bosola gives the latter a new setback as well as a motive for more destructive deeds. Betrayed, Bosola cries:

> I stand like one
> That long hath ta'en a sweet and golden dream.
> I *am angry with myself*, now that I wake.[32]

From now onwards we see that the action of the play becomes more complex. First of all we notice a kind of pricking of conscience in Bosola, who after suffering the

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31. Ibid., p.224.
32. Ibid., p.225.

double setback perceives:

> Were this to do again?
> I would not change my peace of conscience
> For all the wealth of Europe.[33]

Meanwhile the dying Duchess stirs for a moment. Bosola tries to help her breathe and tells her that her husband and children are alive so that she can pick up strength to live. But his last-moment efforts do not fructify. At the moment when the Duchess dies, Bosola philosophically comments on evil nature which, in fact, means himself:

> .... a guilty conscience
> Is a black register, wherein is writ
> All our good deeds and bad - a perspective
> That shows us hell.[34]

There is some ambiguity in the motive behind this transformation in the character of Bosola. As mentioned above Bosola is denied the reward he was promised, and hence he is embittered with Ferdinand. Suddenly Ferdinand, knowing the destructive potential of Bosola, puts him in his clutches on the charges of the Duchess's murder. This naturally leads Bosola to rethink about his strategies to counteract Ferdinand's machinations. In fact he vows to take a revenge upon Ferdinand for the injustice done to him (Bosola) in

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33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., p.226.

denying him the promised reward. In the context of this psychological process of Bosola, his pitying the Duches and asserting himself to be an agent of revenge on the Duchess's behalf seems to be rather equivocal. The same can be said about his feeling the qualm of conscience expressed in the lines quoted above. This equivocal motivation has been considered as a flaw in Webster's dramaturgy. But in fact Webster is not interested in always presenting evil in stark black and white, but some times complex, as is the case with Bosola, and another time purily evil, even as attractive as is the case of Vittoria.

Antonio, tired of prolonged suffering, now seeks reconcilement with the Arragonian brothers in the opening situation of the final Act. His estate has already been confiscated unjustly by the Cardinal and given away to julia as a reward for her lustful relationship with him. He has been moving from place to place for security. Before Antonio meets the two brothers he comes to know that Ferdinand has fallen a victim to lycanthropia and under that fit he feels himself transformed into a "wolf./Steale forth to church-yards in the dead of night, / And dig dead bodies up." This acquires terrible significance with reference backward to his being seized by "palsy" under the impact of his lustful passion. It has more precisely been explained

by Bosola who meets Ferdinand in a state of the fit of lycanthropia, and exclaims, "Mercy upon me, what a fatal judgement/ Hath fallen upon this Ferdinand." This explanation of Bosola in moral terms is a reference to "nemesis." The Cardinal, worried by Ferdinand's distracted behaviour faces more earthquakes as Bosola appears before him to claim his reward. The Cardinal postpones the fulfilment of his promise through the trick of assigning Bosola yet another task before the reward is given to him. The new task is to murder Antonio who is lurking in Milan, because he is the only potent hinderance in the Duchess's re-marriage. But Bosola, who has suffered great losses and has ruined his noble career under the Cardinal's evil guidance, does not get easily befooled. He obeys the Cardinal but only to manipulate things in his favour.

During the Bosola-Cardinal conversation which materialises into some dreadful event, Julia encounters Bosola amorously, "What an excellent shape hath that fellow?" She is patently attracted sexually towards Bosola. Bosola is inclined to respond to her overtures so that through her he could gather intelligence about the extent of the Cardinal's involvement in the Duchess's murder. Julia and Bosola hide themselves behind the traverse. Julia compels the Cardinal under heavy pressure of lust, to reveal the

secret of the Duchess's murder. The Cardinal Confesses:"By my appointment, the great Duchess of Malfi,/And two of her young children, four nights since, were strangled." It is overheard by Bosola. But the Cardinal knows only too well that Julia cannot keep the secret. Therefore he asks her to swear by the Bible. He has already poisoned the page of the Bible. Immediately after swearing by kissing the page of the Bible Julia dies. Bosola at once steps out from behind the traverse and catches the Cardinal red-handed. Under pressure Bosola forces the Cardinal to fulfil his promise but the cunning Cardinal would do so only after Bosola has removed the dead-body of Julia in the dead of night.

Before we proceed to the next movement of the action, it is needful to comment on the "misty vision" and the "pricking of the conscience" of some of the characters after the Duchess's death. First of all Julia dies saying "I go/ I know not whither;" secondly the Duchess's haunting Bosola creates some sort of "pricking of conscience" in him when he thinks it as a "sword hanging over his head" for justice; thirdly the Cardinal feels twice," O my conscience," and "how tedious is a guilty conscience?" But in all the above three cases the pricking of conscience seems very dim and shaky because it does not lead the characters to any higher vision or noble plans and they do not retract from their evil

paths.

Bosola, who had shown some sort of sympathy for the Duchess, intends now to save Antonio whom he himself has to kill in keeping with the Cardinal's instructions. He longs to be friendly with Antonio and to stand against the two brothers who have betrayed him. Meanwhile Antonio and Delio enter to have reconcilement with the two brothers, hoping that they would forgive Antonio. Webster presents here an echo scene wherein Antonio's questions are echoed severally. It may be explained as a foreboding and forewarning to Antonio's disastrous future which the action is going to follow. Antonio intuitively perceives his inevitable journey: "Necessity compels me" and "Fortune hath a part in our miseries."

At this juncture a tragedy of error takes place as we see Bosola who had intended to kill the Cardinal, mistakes Antonio for him and stabs the latter. But soon after stabbing Antonio, Bosola realises his mistake: "We are merely the star's tennis-balls struck and banded/ Which way please them."[35] Thus we see that both Bosola and Antonio towards the end of their life do seem to attain some sort of higher perception of the reality which controls human destiny.

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35. Ibid., p.245.

Towards the end of the play we see the already mentioned "hell's entraping its own evil agents" fructifying. In this connection we notice the Cardinal who instructs the guards and servants not to interrupt him even if he cries for help. He does so to remove the dead body of Julia safely out of his house. But the reason he gives for Ferdinand's suffering from lycanthropia needs no noise and movement. Bosola during the fatal tragedy of error stabs the Cardinal. The latter cries for help but none comes to help him according to his own instruction. Ferdinand responds to the bloody fight, wherein he is wounded by Bosola. In exchange, Bosola, also receives a death wound. At this juncture Bosola reveals his innerself:

> Now my revenge is perfect! Sink, thou main cause
> Of my undoing. The last part of my life,
> Hath done me best service.[36]

The play ends with the Duchess's son from her first husband appearing on the stage to take over the reigns of Amalfi. This is a characteristic device of a tragedy where towards the end of the play order is restored to the world hitherto controlled by anarchy and destruction. This device helps in bringing in an affirmative view of life inspite of the fact that the dramatic world had been

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36. Ibid., p.249.

characterised by the lack of poetic justice. Both the good and evil are destroyed but hope for future is upheld. So far as Webster's The White Devil and The Duchess of Malfi are concerned, the ever-increasing gloom becomes so firmly and palpably established that the perfunctory attempt to restore hope remains too feeble to dissipate the despairing mood of the play. Moreover, the drama of destruction remains chiefly man-made and the operation of any transcendental force is too feeble to induce any philosophic sense of acceptance or resignation. Even Bosola's development into a divine instrument of revenge remains equivocal because his motive is deliberately a fusion of the personal and impersonal impulses. This type of ending of a play is what distinguishes it from a proper tragedy and qualifies it for a different generic sub-division which we have called tragical satire.

CHAPTER - IV

THE REVENGER'S TRAGEDY

The Revenger's Tragedy and The Atheists Tragedy are the two best specimens of tragical satire written by Cyril Tourneur. Often they have been described as the "tragedies of blood," because they abound in murders more than physical, mental or spiritual sufferings. In this regard Tourneur is far inferior to Webster. But the characteristics of tragical satire, mentioned in the first chapter, are as applicable to Tourneur's plays as they were to Webster. Moreover both the dramatists use the same social milieu as their source and their concerns have been with both the society and the individual as sources of evil, corruption and topsy-turvicalness of values at all levels.

Like most of the Jacobean plays The Revenger's Tragedy is set in Italy. The play abounds in an entangled web of lust, incest, fratricide, rape, adultery, mutual distrust, hate, and bloodshed. In the world of the play values at all levels have been completely thrown overboard. Violation of values at the family level, however, has been more emphasized. The causes of violation of values are almost exclusively lust, power, wealth, preferment, and self-advancement.

The play is the revenge story of Vendice who has been wronged by the royal Duke's raping his beloved, Gloriana. The lady, after the violation of her honour and chastity, commits suicide. This obviously enrages Vendice. He keeps the skull of his lady with him all the time as a reminder to him of the need of revenge upon the violator of his beloved's chastity which led to her death. Later in the story the old Duke wants a lady to satisfy his lust. Vendice in disguise acts as a pander for him. Vendice, to take a revenge, puts a beautiful dress on his dead lady's skull and poisons it. The sexually blind Duke kisses the skull, thinking it to be a real woman, and is poisoned. Thus Vendice completes his mission. In the same story are interwoven two other stories. The story of the first sub-plot runs like this: Vendice, after his lady's suicide, puts on a disguise under a false name, i.e. Piato. Lussurioso, the royal Duke's son, and equally adulterous, wants to satisfy his lust on Vendice's own sister, Castiza. Hippolito, Vendice's brother, advises, the latter to attend on Lussurioso in his lustful mission. Vendice introduces himself in the qualitative manner of a Machiavellian villain. This suits Lussurioso's purposes and he assigns Vendice the task of tempting Castiza. Vendice accepts the task because it will serve two purposes. First he will test

his sister's character and secondly he will be able to destroy the corrupt Lussurioso through deception. The other story is that of the Royal Duchess's youngest son who has raped lord Antonio's noble lady. The lady, like Gloriana, commits suicide. A trial is held and the Duke, as the chief justice, passes death sentence on Lussurioso. But the Duchess, who herself is adulterous, opposes this judgement strongly and stands against her husband. After this she joins hands with a bastard, Spurio, who not only promises her to accomplish her evil designs but also to satisfy her sexual desires. Towards the end the Duchess's youngest son, who has been thrown into the prison, is strangled for his heinous crime. Lussurioso becomes the new Duke after his father's murder. Finally during the installation ceremony, he is killed with other evil participants by the revengers.

The bare narration of the plot outline shows that the play deals with an exploration of evil, manifested both in the individual and the society. The first Act deals with the exposition of the chief motives and movements of the central characters who participate in the main plot. All the major characters with their characteristic manners are precisely introduced through Vendice's soliloquy:

> Duke! royal lecher! go, gray-haired adultery!
> And thou his son, as impious steeped as he:

> And thou his bastard, true begot in evil;
> And thou his duchess, that will do with devil:
> Four excellent characters.[1]

The "Four excellent characters" are the Duke, his Duchess, his son Lussurioso, and his bastard, Spurio. Alongwith this satirical introduction Vendice reveals his own wrath against these vicious characters who have done great wrong to him. Here Vendice is both a satirical commentator and a participant in the action. Vendice's reaction after seeing the skull of his beloved arouses his aggressive ire and introduces the revenge motive:

> Vengeance, thou murder's quit-rent, and whereby
> Thou show'st thyself tenant to tragedy;
> O keep thy day, hour, minute, I beseech.
> For those thou hast determined. Hum! whoe'er knew.
> Murder unpaid? Faith, give revenge her due.[2]

Hippolito interrupts Vendice's impassioned fuming. He tells the latter that Lussurioso intends to "seek some strange-digested fellow forth,/Of ill-contented nature;..../ A man that were for evil only."[3] Lussurioso's true nature is already known to Vendice:

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1. George Raylands, ed., The Revenger's Tragedy (G. Bell & Sons, London, 1933), p.181.
   All subsequent textual references are to this edition.
2. Ibid., p.182.
3. Ibid.

.... I know his heat is such,
Were there as many concubines as ladies,
He would not be contained; He must fly out.[4]

However, Vendice accepts the office to act as a knave for Lussurioso because he knows well that "to be honest is not to be in the world./ Brother, I'll be that strange composed fellow." Hippolito -- Vendice conversation is interrupted by his mother (Gratiana) and sister (Castiza). The latter tells the former that the Duchess's youngest son has committed a rape on Antonio's lady who committed suicide. This goads Vendice further against the lecherous Duke family. The Royal Duke's family, the custodian of the affairs and welfare of the dukedom, acquires a symbolical status of a rich reservoir of evil animalistic appetite, the regulation and not the fulfilment, of which is the responsibility of the state.

The opening speech of the play does not only make us aware of the qualitative manners of the "Four excellent characters," but also exposes the centreless, rotten society, and the court whose members are supposed to present the right example before the society. But they prove otherwise. Here Vendice's revenge motive is based on his personal grievance and injustice done to some other virtuous

4. Ibid., p.184.

person. The action has advanced so far with the help of Vendice's soliloquy. Tourreur, besides using the movement of the dramatic action to expose the rottenness of society, has used images of lust, death, poison, conspiracy, etc.[5] The pronounced use of these images gives strength and urgency to the movement of the action of the play.

After Vendice has agreed to act as a knave for Lussurioso, the movement of the main plot is left in suspense. Instead, one of the two sub plots has been taken up for dramatization. It is the follow up of the rape of Antonio's noble lady which was presented through the dramatic narrative we have mentioned above.

The trial-scene opens with the Duke in the presiding chair and the two judges. Inspite of the Duchess's and her two sons' appeal[6] to the court for leniency, the Duke, under the influence of the two unrelenting judges, pronounces the judgement of doom on his own youngest son. However, the Duke is persuaded by the Duchess to delay the execution of the judgement for one day. This will give the Duchess and her other sons Ambitioso and Supervacuo some time to manipulate things in their favour. Here an element of

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5. Ibid., pp.181-186.

6. Ibid., pp.186-187.

further complication is introduced. But this complication remains enwrapped in suspense. Ambitioso consoles his youngest brother, "Fear not we'll have a trick to set thee free." Spurio, the bastard, knows how delayed judgements can be favourably exploited through corrupt means:

> Delayed! deferred! nay then, if judgement have
> cold blood,
> Flattery and bribes will kill it.[7]

The Duchess openly opposes the judgement and conspires for her son's release. She curses her husband:

> Indeed, 'tis true, an old man's twice a child;
> - - - One of his single words
> Would quite have freed my youngest dearest son
> - - - but 'tis not,
> And therefore wedlock - faith shall be forgot:
> I'll kill him in his forehead; hate, there feed;
> That wound is deepest, though it never bleed.[8]

The Duchess's attitude to her husband's judicial dispensation shows how falsely and feebly anchored is the value sustaining husband-wife relationship. Her treacherous scheme is followed by a lustful amorous wooing scene. The Duchess catches sight of Spurio, and lasciviously courts him.

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7. Ibid., p.189.
8. Ibid., p.190.

She asks him to make love with her. Though Spurio inwardly feels inclined to it, but outwardly shows hesitation:

> ...but: you are my father's wife - your grace may guess now.[9]

The Duchess's behaviour demonstrates the abysmal depth to which the institution of family has sunk in the world of the play.

The Duchess continues to court Spurio and tries her best to instigate him against the Duke:

> Why, th' art his son but falsely;
> 'Tis a hard question whether he begot thee?[10]

> E'en in the worst, way....
> O, what a grief 'tis that a man should live
> But once i' th' world, and then to live a bastard.[11]

Spurio is overpowered by a strong lustful passion as well as an intent to revenge:

> Ay, there's the vengeance that my birth was wrapped in!
> I'll be revenged for all: not hate, begin;
> I'll call foul incest but a Venial sin.[12]

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9. Ibid., p.191.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p.192.
12. Ibid.

Duke, thou dids't do me wrong; and, by thy act,
Adultery is my nature.
Faith, if the truth were known, I was begot
After some gluttonous dinner.[13]

The second movement of Act I comes to an end with Spurio's firm determination to stand against the Duke:

...my revenge is just!
I was begot in impudent wine and lust.
Step-mother, I consent to thy desires;
I love thy mischief well....[14]

Duke, on thy brow I'll draw my bastardy:
For indeed a bastard by nature should make cuckolds,
Because he is the son of a cuckold - maker.[15]

It is pertinent to note here that in this situation the Duke, who himself is lecherous, announces doom on his adulterous son: while the Duchess, who entertained the lustful Spurio, does defend her son who is charged with the same offence. However, this paradox can be explained with reference to the persona or mask that the Duke adopts for himself in keeping with his different attitudes and responsibilities. But the scathing satire directed against the affrontery of evil to pretend to be just is too strong

13. Ibid., p.193.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.

to explain away the paradox through a recourse to the theory of the mask. In vying with her husband for greater Machiavellianism the Duchess proves to be a greater schemer than the Duke. Thus one major pillar of family institution, that is husband-wife relationship, has completely collapsed. Besides this, the Duke, the custodian of law, has been exposed as a great violator of law. At the structural level we notice that the sub-plot has taken primacy over the main plot. The sub-plot which started simply, is developed into a three pronged complication. The first is the manipulation of the release of the Duke's yongest son; and the second is the Duchess - Spurio sexual relationship, just introduced and now further developed; and the third is Spurio's resolve to take a revenge upon the Duke. Thus we have now two more revengers, besides Vendice, into the general fabric of The Revenger's Tragedy. The Duchess wants to take a revenge upon her husband for not listening to her plea to acquit her son and Spurio has been enflamed into taking a revenge independently upon the Duke for his lecherous behaviours as well as guided by his lustful involvement with the Duchess. The ironical situation to note is that one evil is intent upon destroying the other evil for the very reason for which he himself stands.

The movement of the action that follows deals with

Vendice whom Hippolito has to present to Lussurioso in disguise. Before Vendice introduces himself to Lussurioso, he, in a brief soliloquy asserts:

> ... Impudence!
> Thou goddess of the palace, mistress of mistresses,
> To whom the costly perfumed people pray,
> Strike thou my forehead into dauntless marble,
> Mine eyes to steady sapphires.[16]

Lussurioso thanks Hippolito for providing the former with a knave (disguised Vendice) and ensures his favour. Vendice, in disguise, presents himself to Lussurioso as a "true child of court," and a perfect "bone setter." Vendice gives a self-portrait of varied villainous nature and competence and recounts to Lussurioso his 'remarkable' achievements and feats in evil deeds. Vendice's villainous character suits Lussurioso's purpose. The first task which Lussurioso assigns to Vendice is to tempt Castiza to respond to the former's lustful attraction for her. Outwardly Vendice gives his consent to do the job but he reveals his real intention in his soliloquy after Lussurioso leaves him:

> Now let me burst. I've eaten noble poison;
> We are made strange fellows, brother innocent villains!
> Wil't not be angry, when thou hear'st on't, think'st thou?

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16. Ibid., p.194.

Swear me to foul my sister!
Sword, I durst make a promise of him to thee;
Thou shalt disheir him; it shall be thine honour.[17]

In the last movement of Act I, Antonio narrates to Hippolito and Piero details of how his wife was ravished and then how she committed suicide.[18] Antonio's heart-rending description of his virtuous lady's cide draws Hippolito and Piero in his favour. He mocks at the judicial system, "judgement in this age, is near kin to favour." This is highlighted by Hippolito in his agressive mood when he draws his sword: "Nay then, step forth, thou bribeless officer." Hippolito and Piero joins hands with noble Antonio to avenge on the offender.

Thus we see that by the end of Act I all the major movements of the plot are set in motion. The three strands of the revenge plotline are now clear. They are, first, of Vendice against the Duke; second of Vendice's plotting against Lussurioso; and the third of Antonio, Hippolito and Piero against the youngest son.

The second Act deals with Vendice who acts as a pander and in this role he testifies to the characters of Castiza and Gratiana. Secondly Vendice succeeds in diverting Lussurioso's attention from his sister by

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17. Ibid. p.200.

18. Ibid. p.202-203.

instigating the latter against Spurio and the Duchess. The Act opens with Castiza's bemoaning tc herself her lot cast in a world of evil.[19] Her lonely meditation is interrupted by Dondola (a noble), who, in a comically jesting manner, informs her that some stranger wants to talk with her. Before disguised Vendice enters, Castiza feels some sort of relief as she hopes "some happy tidings from my brother, that lately travelled, whom my soul affects." But the expectation is reversed when disguised Vendice apprises her of Lussurioso's lustful proposal. Castiza boxes into Vendices ear at this proposal. Though Vendice does not succeed as a pander but he does as a saviour of his sister's honour, at which he feels happy:

> O, I'm above my tongue: most constant sister,
> In this thou hast right honourable shown,
> ...Thou art approved for ever in my thoughts.[20]

But Vendice has to do the pleasure of Lussurioso also, and for this he "will lay/Hard siege into my mother." He tempts Gratiana promising her a wealthy prospect:

> There are too many poor ladies already;
> Why should you wax the number? 'Tis despised,
> Live wealthy, rightly understand the world,

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20. Ibid. p.206-207.

And chide away that foolish country girl
Keeps company with your daughter.[21].

First Gratiana rejects the proposal but when Vendice tempts her repeatedly, she begins to yield: "O Heaven! this overcomes me." Immediately after receiving money from Vendice, Gratiana completely turns in his favour and perceives wealth as a supreme thing:

Ay, these are they ....
That enchant our sex. These are
The means that govern our affections.[22]

Under the heavy pressure of a wealthy prospect Gratiana tries to force Castiza," Deny advancement! treasure! the Duke's son." Nevertheless Castiza remains true to herself and the wealthy prospect has no effect on her. But Vendice again tries to bewitch her:

O' think upon the pleasure of the palace!
Secured ease and status! the stirring meats,
Banquets abroad by torchlight! sports!....
Nine coaches waiting-hurry, hurry,hurry,-[23]

Vendice's rhetoric comically tempts Gratiana who feels,"if I were young I should be ravished," and prepares herself to offer to Lussurioso's pleasure:

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21. Ibid., p.208-209.
22. Ibid., p.209.
23. Ibid.,p.212.

My lord shall be most welcome, when his pleasure
Conducts him this way. I will sway mine own.[24]

The first movement of Act II comes to an end with Vendice's satiric comments, "O, were't not for gold and women, there would be no damnation." It is to be noticed here that Vendice plays a very complicated role here in this situation. If he succeeds in his mission he fails to do the assigned job, and when he persuades his mother to bewitch Castiza's ears, he suffers the loss of family honour.

The next situation opens with further contrasting results. Lussurioso waits for some happy news from Vendice. Vendice informs Lussurioso of Castiza's refusal and the promises of Gratiana. Vendice continues to play the complex role and satisfies Lussurioso much against his will. His pretended favouring Lussurioso is easily seen through his ironical speech:

My loved lord! (Exit Lussurioso)
O, shall I kill him o' th' wrong side now? no!
Sword, thou wast never a backbiter yet.
I'll pierce him to his face; he shall die looking
upon me.
Thy veins are swelled with lust, this shall unfill' em.
Great men were gods, if beggars could not kill'em.[25]

24. Ibid., p.214.
25. Ibid., p.218.

Vendice's manipulating designs continue through various moves of the play. After befooling Lussurioso, Vendice is told by Hippolito that, the "Vicious old Duke's worthily abused;/The pen of his bastard writes him cuckold." This is immediately followed by Spurio, who with his two attendants passes over the two brothers. In fact, Spurio is told by his servants that Lussurioso intends within this hour "to steal/Unto Hippolito's sister, whose chaste life/ The mother has corrupted for his use." And hence he wants to catch Lussurioso red-handed in the shameful act. But Vendice thinks that Spurio is to meet the Duchess and he poisons the ears of Lussurioso against Spurio. Thus Vendice succeeds to direct lussurioso's attention from his sister to the Duchess. Lussurioso aided by Vendice now runs after Spurio. Hippolito rightly perceives the future course of the action on which he comments chorically:

> ... there's gunpowder i' the court,
> Wildfire at midnight. In this heedless fury
> He may show violence to cross himself.[26]

Likewise the next movement of the action of Act II is also full of unexpected reversals. Lussurioso, as guided by Vendice, discovers the Duke and the Duchess in bed. He

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26. Ibid., p.222.

mistakes the Duke for Spurio and prepares to attack him. But before any damage is done, Lussurioso comes to know that it is the Duke sleeping with the Duchess. The Duke charges Lussurioso with an attempted murder and punishes him accordingly. This makes Vendice highly satisfied with his revengeful strategem: "It is now good policy to be from sight;/ His vicious purpose to our sister's honour/ I crossed beyond our thought." While being led to the prison Lussurioso begs his life from his two brothers, "my best release lies on your tongues; I pray persuade for me."

At this juncture the nature of the two brothers is worth paying attention to. They outwardly promise release of Lussurioso but inwardly seek his doom:

> Now, brother, let our hate and love be woven
> So subtle together, that in speaking one word for his life.
> We may make three for his death.
> The craftiest pleader gets most gold for breath.[27]

They wish so to inherit his property. The two brothers' evil nature is well perceived by the Duke himself; "I'll try them both upon their love and hate." The Duke alters the judgement of doom on Lussurioso, which is opposed by the two brothers:

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27. Ibid., p.225.

The situation continues to be complicated when the Duke changes his judgement again. Towards the end of the second Act the Duke confesses his fault and comments satirically on the court system and on his own self:

> It well becomes that judge to nod at crimes,
> That does commit greater himself, and lives,
> I may forgive a disobedient error,
> That expect pardon for adultery,
> And in my old days am a youth in lust.
> Many a beauty have I turned to poison
> In the denial, covetous of all.
> Age hot is like a monster to be seen;
> My hairs are white, and yet my sins are green.[28]

It is needful here to comment on the evil nature of the Duke. When he faced Lussurioso while sleeping with the Duchess, he revealed his rotten innerself:

> O, take me not in sleep!
> I have great sins; I must have days,
> Nay, months, dear son, with penitential heaves,
> To lift 'em out, and not to die unclear.
> O, thou wilt kill me in Heaven and here.[29]

Moreover, the two brothers of Lussurioso - Supervacuo and Ambitioso are not only envious of the former but also of each other.

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28. Ibid., p.227.
29. Ibid., p.222.

Each of them wants to inherit all the property of Lussurioso to the exclusion of other. And for this they are even ready to kill each other. The bastard Spurio also stands against Lussurioso and supports the judgement of doom by the Duke, though he himself is thoroughly corrupt sexually. It is pertinent to point out here that unlike in a tragedy, here the Duke's confession to himself of his past sins does not lead to any development of his character. On the surface the regrets look like the qualm of conscience but in reality it is merely a dramatic device for self-portrayal.

The third Act deals with fatal intrigues which are full of confusion, deception, and misunderstandings. Further the evil and rotten nature of the major participants in the drama of evil perceived in the preceding Acts is brought into a clearer light in this Act. The fatal intrigues begin with Supervacuo's and Ambitioso's attempt to beguile the prison officers to starngulate Lussurioso instead of the youngest son. Then the two brothers themselvs try to kill each other in order to inherit the property of Lussurioso after his death. Finally Vendice and Hippolito, to avenge themselves on the old Duke, deceitfully present him the poisoned skull of Gloriana. So far the action of the play has become fairly complicated. The outcome is uncertain but destructive ends of the different characters are

threatened with the revelation of their corrupt nature. From the thematic point of view the threatened topsy-turvicalness with which the play began becomes an all-pervasive chaos. And structurally the complication in the plotline, with suspenseful stories, seems to head towards a major catastrophe.

However, the last movement of Act III is full of reversals and contrasts. The two brothers, Ambitioso and Supervacuo, gloat over their expected, and successfully manipulated murder of Lussurioso, and the release of the youngest son. Their happiness is ironically enhanced when the prison officers show the bleeding head to the two brothers. But very soon their hope of wealthy inheritance, after Lussurioso's death, is thwarted as Lussurioso appears alive before them. The third Act comes to an end with 'plagues,' 'confusions', 'darkness', and 'death'. When the officers assert that the bleeding head was that of the youngest son, it leaves 'torments' and 'Hell' falling upon the two brothers. Thus by the end of the third Act we see that Vendice's main task of taking a revenge upon the old Duke is completed. Secondly, the Duchess's youngest son who was accused of the same adulterous deed, is also punished with death, though it has been done in confusion. In the fourth Act confusion is mixed with treacherous deception. Lussurioso discharges disguised Vendice for his villainous and false information of the Duchess's sleeping with Spurio. And for

this Lussurioso was heavily punished by the Duke for the attempted murder. Lussurioso does not want Vendice to remain alive because the latter knows all the secrets of the former and for this Lussurioso asks Hippolito to seek some "ill content" fellow. Vendice once again follows another Machiavellian trick and drops his disguise. Hippolito again presents Vendice to Lussurioso to attend to the latter. Now Vendice will go in his real form which was known to the old Duke only. Thus Lussurioso is trapped in his own net because he will employ the same person whom he has recently discharged. There is an element of ironic comedy in the present situation when Lussurioso expresses his satisfaction thus:

> This fellow will come fitly; he shall kill
> That other slave, that did abuse my spleen,
> And made it swell to treason....
> ... I'll employ the brother;
> He being of black condition, suitable
> To want and ill-content, hope of preferment
> Will grind him to an edge.[30]

Before Vendice meets Lussurioso, in a choric manner he clarifies his strategems as follows:

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30. Ibid., p. 250-251

> Now the Duke is dead, the realm is clad in clay.
> His death being not yet known, under his name
> The people still are governed. Well, thou his son
> Are not long-lived: thou shalt not joy his death.
> To kill thee, then I should most honour thee.[31]

After revealing his real motive to get employment at Lussurioso's court, Vendice portrays himself to the former as a fully equipped and perfect villain. Vendice's training in evil suits Lussurioso. Vendice's choric selfportrayal in an indirect manner implicates Lussurioso, too, who does not have enough wit to understand the former's satirical insinuations. Lussurioso assigns to Vendice the task of killing Piato who is disguised Vendice. Not only this, Lussurioso, to set Vendice against Piato, confesses all his involvement with Castiza and Gratiana. Vendice, inspite of being well aware of Lussurioso's evil and rotten nature, accepts the task to kill Piato. But Lussurioso warns Vendice that he will kill Piato himself and not Vendice.

The second movement of the fourth Act comes to an end with Hippolito's and Vendice's Machiavellian intrigue which they hatch to gull the suspicion of the old Duke's death and to get rid of Lussurioso. The intrigue, which the two

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31. Ibid., p.252.

brothers conspire, is to dress up the dead body of the Duke whom Vendice has already poisoned by the skull of his beloved. The dress is the familiar disguise of Vendice which he wore while acting as Piato. By putting the dress of disguise on the Duke's body Vendice wants to show as if Piato was sleeping in a drunken state after killing the Duke.

Till now Vendice had played the role under a false name of Piato in disguise, and a pander to persuade his own sister and mother for Lussurioso. But this time he is hired to kill himself. This has put him in a real tight corner. This increases the reader's interest in the situation considerably. .

In the next situation Ambitioso and Supervacuo catche Spurio and the Duchess red-handed while making love to each other. But they do not immediately punish the two adulterous partners. They reserve this for future exploitation.

This brief scene is followed by Vendice's and Hippolito's testifying to the characters of their sister Castiza and mother Gratiana. Vendice's charges are strongly defended by his mother. But when he reveals himself, Gratiana, feeling a guilty conscience,confesses the

shameful deed. Nevertheless Gratiana's confessional pleas make her sons quite moved and she is forgiven. Gratiana's transformed character is further questioned by Castiza. The latter, to test her mother's real nature, pretends to do the pleasure of Lussurioso:

> To do as you have wished me;
> To prostitute my breast to the duke's son;
> And put myself to common usury.[32]

Gratiana sticks to her reformed self and does not yield to corruption any more. The fourth Act comes to an end with a compromising note and a moral which Castiza leaves for virgins: "A virgin's honour is a crystal tower/Which (being weak) is guarded with good spirits; /Until she basely yields, no ill inherits."[33]

The final Act takes up the unresolved bits of the plotline for final resolution. So far the movement of the action has shown the destruction of the two main pillars of corruption. The remaining pillar from the corrupt family, Lussurioso, is left to be destroyed in this final Act. Secondly, discovery of death of the old Duke is still to be made.

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32. Ibid., p.266.

33. Ibid., p.268.

The effectiveness of the movement of the action is heightened by the intervening period between the Act IV and the final one. We have seen a little earlier that the fourth Act ended with Gratiana's repentance and a note of realisation of a higher truth as well. This is contrasted with the opening scene of the final Act which serves as a preparation for a revengeful ambition in a Machiavellian manner, specially arranged by Vendice. Vendice has dressed up the corps of the old Duke in his own disguise which he used to put on while acting as Piato. Before he shows it to Lussurioso he makes his real intention clear:

> Here was the sweetest occasion, the fittest hour, to have made my revenge familiar with him; show him the body of the duke his father, and how quaintly he died, like a politician in hugger-mugger, made no man acquainted with it and in catastrophe slay him over his father's breast.[34]

Lussurioso is shown the dressed up corps of the old Duke. He calls him a 'slave' and a 'villain.' Vendice portrays Lussurioso humourously when he calls the latter as "Tis a good child: he calls his father a slave." As soon as Vendice stabs the Duke's corps Lussurioso immediately recognizes it. But this time again, he is easily befooled and he spares the two brothers:

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34. Ibid., p.268.

'Tis none of your deed. That villain Piato,
Whom you thought now to kill, has murdered
And left him thus disguised.[35]

The next situation is pretty humorous because of irony and is theatrically highly effective. Lussurioso sends servants and guards to trap the murderer of the Duke, while the murderer, Vendice, stands amidst them all, free of any charge. Instead, an innocent gentleman who spoke the truth, is sentenced to death by Lussurioso. This is satirically commented upon by Vendice, "who would not lie, when men are hanged for truth." The Duke's death is taken differently by his near kins. The Duchess outwardly dissembles and only says "My lord and husband." The Duchess's two elder sons Ambitioso and Supervacuo respond to it thus: "Learn of our mother, let's dissemble too:/I am glad he's vanished." While the bastard Spurio feels like this:

Old dad dead!
I, one of his cast sins, will send the Fates
Most hearty commendations by his own son:
I'll tug in the new storm till strength be done.[36]

Finally it is the turn of Lussurioso to mourn his father's death. He, too, feels sad but only outwardly:

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35. Ibid., p.271.
36. Ibid., p.274.

> I'm not at leisure, my good lord.
> I've many griefs to despatch out O' the way. [Aside]
> Welcome sweet titles:-
> Talk to me, my lords,
> Of sepulchres and mighty emperor's bones.[37]

However, Lussurioso is elected the new Duke. The first judgement he passes, after the newly invested authority, is that the Duchess is punished with banishment for she is "suspected [as] foully bent." But Lussurioso is no more to enjoy the Dukedom because Ambitioso and Supervacuo, the two elder sons of the Duchess, are equally interested to become the Duke. This is clarified through their following revelation:

> He shall not live: his hair shall not grow much longer. In this time of revels, tricks may be set afoot. Seest thou yon new moon? it shall outlive the new duke by much; this hand shall dispossess him.[38]

The two brothers, Ambitioso and Supervacuo, are interested, to mutual exclusion, to usurp the title of the Duke and therefore they want to destroy each other. Before the swearing-in ceremony of Lussurioso is held, Vendice, Hippolito, Piero, and other lords determine to get rid of Lussurioso in the midst of the banquet arranged in honour of the new Duke.

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37. Ibid., p.275
38. Ibid., p.276.

The following situation deals with the swearing-in ceremony of Lussurioso as the new Duke. This is done through the conventional device of a dumb-show. Lussurioso, at the very beginning of the show, reveals his jealous and selfish nature:

> That foul incontinent duchess we have banished
> The bastard shall not live. After these revels,
> I'll begin strange ones; he and the step-sons
> Shall pay their lives for the first subsidies:[39]

In the midst of this banquet scene the supernatural interruption is seen in the form of a 'blazing star.' Though it does not fit-in with the situation because the moment is full of dealings with corruption,it has got ill omens for the future action, which is rightly perceived by Lussurioso himself. He reacts to the appearance of the 'blazing star' thus:

> I am not pleased at the ill knotted fire,
> That bushing, staring star. Am I not duke?
> It should not quake me now. Had it appeared
> Before, I might then have justly feared;
> But yet they say, whom art and learning weds,
> Being when stars wear locks, they threaten great men's heads.[40]

39. Ibid., p.278.
40. Ibid., p.279.

The ill omens of the 'blazing star' are immediately followed by corresponding action. As soon as the 'masque' enters, the revengers follow it. In the midst of the dance Lussurioso and his fellow nobles are murdered brutally. Once again the supernatural appearance is seen in the form of a thunder. It is pertinent to recall here the appearance of the thunder earlier. Earlier in the Act when it appeared it had supported Vendice's intention of taking a revenge upon the corrupt Duke's family. Now at the death of Lussurioso it again encourages and hails Vendice's success of his avengeful ambition. Vendice says,

> No power is angry when the lustful die,
> When thunder claps, heaven likes the tragedy.[41]

From now onwards the stage is covered with dead bodies. When Lussurioso is seen on the verge of death, Spurio comes out and declares himself as the Duke. This is strongly protested against by Ambitioso. As a result Spurio kills Ambitioso. In exchange Spurio, too, receives a fatal wound.

Towards the end of the play Tourneur brings Antonio as a token of the restoration of order and harmony. Antonio first of all orders a lord to be executed for Lussurioso's murder. Before Lussurioso succumbs to his death wounds, he

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41. *Ibid.*, p.280.

is tortured by Vendice by revealing himself as the real murderer of the old Duke and of Lussurioso too. Lussurioso could not bear this and dies. Vendice's move to earn praise of Antonio goes awry. Vendice, ignorant of any harm, reveals to Antonio that he has avenged the death of his lady by killing both the old Duke and Lussurioso. Instead of offering a favourable reward, Antonio pronounces the judgement of doom on both Vendice and Hippolito.

Thus the play ends with the destruction of all the exponents and agents of evil. Tourneur presents evil manifested through lust, revenge, preferment and wrongful ambition of power. The representatives of evil group separate and regroup themselves for their personal gains and distrust among comrades in destruction. The values sustaining family, society, and civil administration have fully collapsed and the emergent picture of the milieu is sheer anarchy and chaos where the inhabitants grope in the dark and are eventually destroyed. Though the play abounds in deaths, tragic suffering leading to the realisation of a higher truth is missing. Though Gratiana and Castiza show signs of retaining vestiges of human values, their voices are too feeble and artificially conventionally archaic to have any effective redeeming effect on the pervasive gloom of hopelessness. The effort by the dramatist, towards the

end of the play, to give an affirmative view of life remains a mere structural formality and fails to be a part of our dramatic experience of the final outcome of the entire action of the play. The characters seem to die in vain and are denied any perception of a higher reality or even the most commonplace realisation of their errors. None of the characters develop or if there is any development it is monolithically in the direction of more abysmal depths of evil. Inspite of its horror, deaths and physical sufferings, the play is much inferior to the human and psychological exploration of The Duchess of Malfi and the brilliance of character portrayal of The White Devil.

CHAPTER - V

THE ATHEIST'S TRAGEDY

The Atheist's Tragedy has a close parallelism with The Revenger's Tragedy as well as with the two tragedies of Webster analysed earlier. This play, too, is concerned with an exploration of evil both in the society as well as in human nature. The milieu is characterized by Machiavellian materialism and violation of values at all levels--social, religious, political, familial and above all human. Like a typical tragical satire the play abounds in intrigues, conspiracies, mutual distrust, and collapse of values which sustain life at human as well as social levels. Tourneur uses both conventional dramatic devices and unexpected reversals which produce the effect of theatricality. Maxims and proverbs are strewn all over the play alongwith sometimes unnecessarily prolix generalizations which hamper the proper movement of the plot. The action of the play is full of sufferings, tortures, bloodshed, and murders. There is a deliberate attempt by the dramatist towards the end of the play to restore a sense of balance and order in the chaotic world which was the result of the topsy-turvical values guiding the life of the inhabitants of the world of The Atheist's Tragedy. But the increasingly thickening gloom is not fully dissipated towards the end and the seeming perception attained by the evil characters remains

of doubtful validity because these perceptions are more in the nature of compulsive situations and exegencies created by the circumstances than a proper inner growth of the souls of the evil characters. Our analysis of the play in the following paragraphs will demonstrate that the play falls in line with a tragical satire than a tragicomedy, even though virtue is rewarded in the end. It cannot be regarded a tragicomedy because in a tragicomedy catastrophe is threatened but finally averted. Here catastrophe does overtake the evil practitioners whose activities contribute to the overwhelming gloom and sense of rottenness, whereas the couple of characters who are rewarded, contribute only marginally to the thematic and structural designs of the play. Inspite of the reward to virtue, the gloom is so thick that it is hardly dissipated towards the end of the play and the restoration of order over chaos seems to be more in the nature of a conventional structural device than a convincing outcome of the action of the play.

D'Amville, the central character of the drama, plays the title role. He has two sons, Rousard and Sebastian, but none of them is able to manage his future life. Hence D'Amville, to set a rich future for his posterity, plans to usurp the property of his own brother, Montferrers. The latter, after his death, has only one heir in the form of a son, Charlemont. To usurp Montferrers' property D'Amville

conspires to send Charlemont away to war on a false pretext. Charlemont is in love with Castabella, the only heir to Lord Belforest and she is betrothed to him. But D'Amville wants to marry Castabella to one of his sons in order to inherit her property. Charlemont, a virtuous and a firm believer in the code of honour of his family, is easily persuaded by D'Amville to join the war for the sake of the honour of his family. In his absence, D'Amville treacherously murders Montferrers and forcibly marries Castabella to his sickly son Rousard. Ultimately he usurps the property of both Charlemont and Castabella. When Charlemont returns from the war, D'Amville arrests him and throws him into prison. Towards the end of the play D'Amville tries to kill Charlemont. But he strikes his own brains out with an axe. Charlemont is saved and is united with Castabella and regains his usurped property. Parallel to this runs another story which deals with the lustful affairs of Levidulcia, the wife of Lord Belforest and other criminals. Finally all the corrupt persons are duly punished and law and order seems to be restored at the end of the play.

The first Act consists of four movements. At the very outset D'Amville plans how to usurp Montferrers', property and marry Castabella to his son Rousard. He succeeds in his mission partly by getting Charlemont sent to the war. This enables him to get Castabella forcibly

married to Rousard. But within the family of D'Amville, Sebastian opposes this marriage and favours Castabella in her disapproval of the meritless groom that Rousard is.

In the very opening situation of the first Act, D'Amville and Borachio, the two chief evil participants in the main action of the play, offer a choric commentary on human life in general, which is a major characteristic of a tragical satire:

> Borachio, thou art read in
> Nature and her large philosophy
> Observ'st thou not the very selfsame course
> Of revolution both in man and beast?[1]

> The same, for birth, growth, state, decay, and death;
> Only a man's beholding to his Nature
> For th' better composition o' the two.[2]

But according to the observation of D'Amville and Borachio this "better composition of the two" is of little profit because "a man becomes/ A fool as little knowing as a beast." Both D'Amville and Borachio are firm believers in the philosophy of Nature. Borachio supports this argument thus:

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1. The Atheist's Tragedy, Irving Ribner, ed.,(Methuen & Co., London, 1964), p.4.
   All subsequent references are to this edition of the text.
2. Ibid., p.5.

> ... there's nothing in a man above
> His Nature, if there were, considering 't is
> His being's excellency 't would not yield
> To Nature's weakness....[3]

The general commentary on the transitoriness of human life is dramatically directed to the particular by D'Amville:

> Then if death casts up
> Our total sum of joy and happiness,
> Let me have all my senses feasted in
> Th' abundant fulness of delight at once
> And with a sweet insensible increase
> Of pleasing surfiet melt into my dust.[4]

Not only this, D'Amville believes that "pleasure only flows/ upon the stream of riches." Borachio, too, supports it, "wealth is lord/ of all felicity." D'Amville's greed for hoarding wealth for himself and his progeny is revealed in his long soliloquy on the importance of conserving and increasing "substance" to support one's position:

> And for my children, they are as near to me
> As branches to the tree whereon they grow,
> And may as numerously be multipli'd.
> As they increase, so should my providence,
> For from my substance they receive the sap
> Whereby they live and flourish.[5]

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3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p.6.

The commentaries of the above mentioned characters on materialism, self-aggrandisement as well as philosophic perception of all the frailties that human flesh is heir to form the crux of the main thematic burden of the play. They show the elements of both satire and tragic action which, intermingled together, develop the drama of the play.

D'Amville-Borachio conversation is temporarily interrupted by Charlemont's hesitation to join the war. The reason why Charlemont does not want to go to the war is two fold: first he is the only son and heir to his father, and secondly Charlemont is denied maintenance by his father. D'Amville at once catches the second point and encourages Charlemont by offering him a 'thousand crowns'. D'Amville's hypocritically simulating nature is easily seen when he says:

> ... I'd disinherit my posterity
> To purchase honour. 'Tis an interest
> I prize above the principal of wealth.[6]

Charlemont is easily persuaded by D'Amville by offering him a 'thousand crowns'. Before Charlemont leaves D'Amville he enters into a bond for "the repayment of this gold." After Charlemont takes leave the earlier interrupted conversation between D'Amville and Borachio is resumed. Earlier the

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6. Ibid., p.7.

argument was only about wealth but this time it shifts to the means "how to compass it." The way is hinted at by Borachio:

> Young Charlemont is going to the war....
> The happy absence of this Charlemont
> A subject for commodious providence.
> He has a wealthy father, ready even
> To drop into his grave and no man's power
> When Charlemont is gone, can interpose
> 'T wixt you and him.[7]

Borachio himself accepts the offer to complete this treacherous task. For this he is promised "thy reward shall parallel thy worth." The first movement of the first Act comes to an end with D'Amville's yet another exposition of his lust for wealth when he sees his two sons Rousard and Sebastian:

> Here are my sons....
> There's my eternity. My life in them
> And their succession shall for ever live,
> And in my reason dwells the providence
> To add to life as much of happiness.
> Let all men lose, so I increase my gain
> I have no feeling of another's pain.[8]

D'Amville's self-portrayal significantly contrasts with his

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7. Ibid., p.8.

8. Ibid., p.9.

earlier musings over the transitoriness and essential bestiality of human life and nature. It also brings into bold relief his cunning hypocritical nature which he tries to hide by his proclivities to philosophise.

So far in the action of the play we have seen that honesty in the world of The Atheist's Tragedy is nothing but "miserable and contemptible quality" and "it is wealth which is the lord." Here we notice an echoe from the earlier play of Tourneur where almost all the villainous deeds have been done for the sake of wealth alone. Preferment and self-advancement, even by wading through blood of kinsmen, is one of the main themes of the play. This is explicitly confessed by D'Amville,"Let all men lose so I increase my gain/ I have no feeling of another's pain."

D'Amville's evil machinations are contrasted with Montferrers' pitious and heart- rending urge to stop Charlemont from going to the war. But D'Amville privately convinces Montferrers and cunningly diverts his attention from Charlemont. He succeeds in his mission to persuade Montferrers in his own favour.[9]

D'Amville's argument is well supported by Lord Belforest and his lady Levidulcia. Contrasted to this is

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9. Ibid., p.10.

Castabella's pathetic love-lorn condition. Guided by her honest amorous emotions she naturally does not want Charlemont to go to the war. But all her repeated urges are of no avail. Before Charlemont bids farewell to Castabella, he appoints Languebeau Snuff, a puritan, as his faithful friend and guard to Castabella. Snuff, as a true friend of Charlemont, witnesses the contract of Castabella's love to Charlemont and assures them:

> I salute you both with the spirit of copulation. I am already informed of your matrimonial purposes and will be a testimony to the integrity of your promises. [10]

The above speech is ironically hypocritical, becasue later on Snuff, too, proves false to his promises. Immediately after Charlemont's departure, things begin to turn against Castabella. Her foreseeing of "some sad event will follow my sad fears," 'fearful soul', 'heavy clouds', 'mourning heads', 'ill success', etc., mentioned in her departing speech, begin to concretise in action. D'Amville succeeds in his strategy to win over Snuff in his favour with the help of gold. Snuff willingly accepts the job of enticing Castabella to amorously respond in favour of D'Amville's sickly son Rousard. The 'faithful' friend of Charlemont turns false to his promises which he had made earlier. Instead of guarding

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10. Ibid., p.13.

Castabella Languebeau begins to entice her to lust as planned by D'Amville. His true hypocritical nature is revealed when he openly plays a pander and says:

> Charlemont, thy gratuity and my promises were both,
> But words, and both like words shall vanish into air
> For thy poor empty hand I must be mute,
> This gives me feeling of a better suit.[11]

This behaviour and attitude of Languebeau show how virtue yields to the pressure of materialism and low desires and thus thicken the ever-increasing gloom of the dramatic world of the play where values sustaining normal life have turned topsy-turvical.

D'Amville as a participant in the action is happy at the desired role played by Languebeau. But as a satiric commentator he does not spare Languebeau from being whipped satirically.

> And seems to know if any benefit
> Arrives of religion after death,
> Yet but compare 's profession with his life;
> They so directly contradict themselves
> As if the end of his instructions were
> But to divert the world from sin that he
> More easily might engross it to himself.
> By that I am confirm'd an atheist.[12]

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11. Ibid., p.17.
12. Ibid.

Though here D'Amville is a commentator as well as a participant in the drama, his role is functionally different from the similar role played by Antonio in the opening situation of Webster's The Duchess of Malfi. While D'Amville justifies his atheism concluded from his observation of the distortion and degeneration of virtue, Antonio leaves out the personal involvement altogether.

After describing Languebeau's true profession D'Amville reveals his own motive behind sending Charlemont away to the war and arranging Castabella's marriage with Rousard:

> Well, Charlemont is gone and here thou see'st
> His absence the foundation of my plot.
> He is the man whom Castabella loves
> That was the reason I propounded him
> Employment fix'd upon a foreign place,
> To draw his inclination out o' th' way.[13]

> This Castabella is a wealthy heir;
> And by her marriage with my elder son;
> My house is honour'd and my state increas'd.
> This work alone deserves my industry.[14]

Borachio becomes a willing instrument to help in the execution of the plot of D'Amville. The second movement of

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13. Ibid., p.17.
14. Ibid., p.18.

the first Act comes to an end with D'Amville-Borachio's treacherous intrigue to turn Castabella against Charlemont.

In this situation Languebeau's role of a treacherous villain, hints at the widespread corruption prevailing among the religious persons who are supposed to set right examples before the society. D'Amville's denial of anything above human nature and his blind pursuit after sensual pleasures to the complete flouting of all established values show that he is following his avowed path of atheism. The theme of preferment and advancement is presented through Languebeau who, for the sake of money, turns into a pander from a religious person. The images, particularly drawn from animals, reinforce the rottenness and low-level existence which characterise the world of the play. From the structural point of view the play exploits the conventional device of disguise to manipulate evil deeds as well as to effect the movement of the action and is in keeping with the convention of a tragical satire.

The rottenness of the world of the play, because of the topsyturvical state of all values, is further thickened when we find that the case of the impotent Rousard is favoured even by the parents of Castabella, who are instigated and assisted by Languebeau Snuff. The mother, after her acquiescence to Languebeau's strategies, argues thus:

Verily, that disobedience doth not become a child.
It proceedeth from an unsanctified liberty.
You will be accessory to your own dishonour if you suffer it. [15]

Unaware of any other evil plan, Belforest is easily persuaded by Languebeau and resolves:

Your honest wisdom has advis'd me well.
Once more I'll move her by persuasive means.
If she resist, all mildness set apart,
I will make use of my authority.
... This instant night she shall be married.[16]

The next havoc which Castabella faces, appears in the form of Languebeau Snuff. Castabella's protestations of faithfulness, true love, and comitment to the contract of her marriage with Charlemont, do not have any effect on Languebeau. Instead he tries to divert her attention from Charlemont and says:

Since Charlemont's absence I have weighed his love with the spirit of consideration, and in sincerity I find it to be frivolous and vain. Withdraw your respect; his affection deserveth it not.[17]

Can he deserve your love who, in neglect
Of your delightful conversation and
In obstinate contempt of all your prayers

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15. Ibid., pp.21-22.
16. Ibid., p.22.
17. Ibid.

And tears, absents himself so far from you.[18]

Castabella's virtuousness and firm resolve to love Charlemont is contrasted with her mother's animalistically passionate nature. Levidulcia, a perfect woman of the court, knows well how to remain in the limelight of the society. Like D'Amville she knows that in a woman "the passage lies not through her reason but her blood." She is well versed in enjoying luxurious life through the various means which nature has provided to men. She tries to convince Castabella in her characteristic manner:

> How wouldst thou call the child
> That being rais'd with cost and tenderness
> To full ability of body and means
> Denies relief unto the parents who
> Bestow'd that bringing up?[18]

> Nature, the loving mother of us all,
> Brought forth a woman for her own relief,
> By generation to revive her age,
> Which, now thou hast ability and means
> Presented, most unkindly dost deny.[20]

Levidulcia's typical character of a lustful woman and a follower of nature is best represented in the following

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18. Ibid., p.23.
19. Ibid., p.24.
20. Ibid.

speech when she strongly disapproves of all the pathetic protestations of Castabella:

> Prefer'st th' affection of an absent love
> Before the sweet possession of man,
> The barren mind before the fruitful body
> Where our creation has no reference.
> To man but in his body - - - - - -
> Wise Nature; therefore, hath
> Our greatest pleasure in that greatest work,
> Which being offer'd thee, thy ignorance
> Refuses for th' imaginary joy
> Of an unsatisfi'd affection
> To an absent man.[21]

Castabella's helpless condition is worth noticing when she kneels down to one person after the other. All her pleas go awry and she is forcibly prepared to marry Rousard. However, among all the evil persons, D'Amville's younger son Sebastian emerges as the defender of Castabella. He boldly opposes the forced marriage calling it "A rape, a rape, a rape ;... To marry one ... with him she would not." But Sebastian, too, like Castabella remains helpless and he could not save the situation.

The first Act comes to an end with Sebastian's satiric commentary which is aimed at the religious profession of Languebeau Snuff: "And verify the proverb the nearer the Church, the farther from god."[22]

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21. Ibid., pp.24-25.
22. Ibid., p.27.

By the end of Act I almost all the major characters with their characteristic manners are introduced. The chief motives, moods, and situations which set the foundation of the action of the play are clarified in this Act. Contrast between virtue and vice, passion and reason, has been presented by the two central characters-- D'Amville and Charlemont. At the very opening of the play it is made clear that in the dramatic world of Tourneur there is no place for the virtuous. Lust for preferment, and fleshly pleasures has transformed Tourneur's dramatic world into one of utter chaos.

By the end of Act I we saw that all the issues concerning the thematic and structural designs of a tragical satire have been introduced and substantially developed. The second Act chiefly deals with D'Amville's apparently successful manouevres. First of all D'Amville and Borachio brutally murder Montferrers. Secondly the chief participants of the sub-plot are introduced in the action with their characteristic manners. The Act opens with a banquet which is specially arranged in honour of the marriage ceremony of Rousard with Castabella. In the midst of the banquet the preplanned entry of the disguised Borachio changes the direction of the current of the action. His appearance as a soldier, "newly returned from Ostend," in disguise makes Montferrers suspicious. Through the long

narrative Borachio tells that during the fight with the enemy Charlemont is slain. He supports this concocted news of Charlemont's death with the duplicate scarf which Charlemont used to put on during the fight. At this D'Amville outwardly shows grief but inwardly feels happy when he calls Borachio "a most delicate sweet villain." Now he feels hopeful of his future success when he asserts:

> So the foundation's laid. Now by degrees
> The work will rise and soon be perfected.[23]

D'Amville's corrupt and hypocritical nature is highlighted by the puritan Languebeau Snuff. After Borachio's revelation of the false concocted story Snuff suggests Montferrers to make a will because his only heir, Charlemont, is killed in the war. Helpless Montferrers is easily convinced by the hypocritical puritan and the former agrees to make a will.

D'Amville's evil machinations follow the rehearsal of the murder of Montferrers. During the course of the rehearsal D'Amville proudly cheers: "Fortune, I honour thee. My plot still rises/ According to the model of mine own desires." Every thing seems to be now in favour of D'Amville who accompanies Montferrers for a walk to suit his purpose.

In the following situation a contrast between virtue and vice is presented through Levidulcia and Castabella.

23. Ibid., p.33.

In the opening soliloquy, Castabella stoically endures the judgement of heaven. This is contrasted with Levidulcia's fickleness and lecherous character. The bestiality of her nature is evinced in her unquenchable sexual appetite which she satisfies by proving false to the sanctity of her nuptial bed. Her courting Sebastian and then Fresco hints at her lustful nature. This becomes more abhorable when contrasted with Castabella's constant nature and her firm belief in the divine power. The figures-in-speech are followed by figures-in-action as Borachio appears with a stone, in each hand, showing the progress of D'Amville's plot. This is hinted at by Borachio:

> Such stones men use to raise a house upon,
> But with these stones I go to ruin one.[24]

According to a preplanned intrigue D'Amville walks with Montferrers in the dead dark of the night. Montferrers' feeling uneasiness is a sort of a premonition of a disaster. He rightly perceives:

> My soul's oppres'd with grief. 'T lies heavey at
> My heart O my departed son, ere long
> I shall be with thee.[25]

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24. Ibid., p.40.

25. Ibid., p.43.

This premonition is followed by action when D'Amville thrusts Montferrers down into the gravel pit where he dies. To gull suspicion and convince others, D'Amville simulates grief and shock.

But very soon this simulation is exposed when D'Amville and Borachio themselves reveal their real nature.[26] D'Amville's foundation of his plot is already laid; the death of Montferrers further facilitates it.

During D'Amville-Borachio's gloating over their successfully manipulating the murder of Montferrers, the intervention of the supernatural power is seen in the form of "thunder and lightning." At first D'Amville's response to it is as of a "mere effect of nature" but later on he feels it as a "brave noise." Borachio, too, perceives it as a fearful noise. Though the 'thunder and lightning' has a dramatic significance other than the ones realized by Borachio and D'Amville, its full significance becomes clear only later in the play;

I'll wear thy colours at his funeral.[27]

D'Amville-Borachio's evil machinations are suspended for some time and the action of the sub-plot is taken up for further development. We encounter here a number of courtship

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26. Ibid., p.44.
27. Ibid., p.48.

scenes involving Levidulcia, Fresco, and Sebastian. Fresco's tactlessness in love is contrasted with Sebastian's bold moves which he makes towards Levidulcia. But before he could satisfy Levidulcia's hot lust, Belforest's entry frightens them away. Levidulcia is caught almost red-handed in a lustful course of action, but as a typical court lady she tries to save her face by narrating a concocted story to Fresco which the latter is advised to communicate to Belforest.

The last movement of the second Act deals with the revelation by the ghost about Montferrers' death. Charlemont naturally gets frightened but manages to retain his sanity and restraint. For a moment he is caught by a dilemma which is Hegelian in import. The ghost advises him to resign to his lot when he has been disinherited because he has been assumed to be dead. This would require his home return. But then he feels duty-bound to proceed to the war which he has been enjoined upon as a part of the bigger strategies of the agents of evil.

It is needful here to comment on the appearance of the supernatural power in the form of the ghost which has appeared twice in the second Act. At first the thunder appears before D'Amville who takes it as a favourable noise for his evil machinations. But it foretells his destructive future course which is rightly perceived by Borachio.

Secondly the inciting of revenge by the ghost of Montferrers is different from that of the conventional revenge plays. Conventionally the ghost of the murdered person incites revenge to be taken by a near kin. Thirdly through the introduction of the members of the sub-plot, we come to know that the central character--Levidulcia- is a firm believer in the philosophy of Nature. For her reason exists no where and passion controls the inner self of a woman. Hence the evil nature of the central characters of the two plots hints at the close parallelism between the sub-plot and the main plot.

So far we have seen the development of the plot of D'Amville's 'Industry.' The third Act further shows a development in D'Amville's evil machinations. At the same time he is threatened by the appearance of the supernatural power. The third Act is full of paradoxical movements and unexpected reversals. Ironical and humorous situations add to the strength of the action of the play. The Act opens with the ironical situation when D'Amville appears with the funerals of both Montferrers and Charlemont. D'Amville's fearful reaction to what is written on the two epitaphs and particularly staring at Charlemont's grave shows his guilty self:

O might that fire revive the ashes of

> This phoenix! Yet the wonder would not be
> So great as he was good and wond'red at
> For that.[28]

The above speech contains dramatic irony because the 'phoenix' mentioned by D'Amville does revive in the following action of the play. Further Charlemont is alive and D'Amville knows well this only too. Yet to convince the public he has 'bury'd under the marble stone' Charlemont's live hopes. D'Amville's false tears are contrasted with the really pathetic mourning of Castabella. This shows a deliberately introduced incongruency between pretence and truth to highlight the rottenness of the whole situation.

Reversal of situation starts taking place when Charlemont meets Castabella in the churchyard where she is mourning over his grave. Charlemont's meeting with Castabella should bring joy; instead he faces 'grief above griefes' when she reveals her suffering. The discovery of Montferrers' death and Castabella's forced marriage do not have any significant effect on Charlemont.

At the end of the first Act we noticed that Sebastian had changed his attitude towards Charlemont. For this, now D'Amville effects his ouster from the family. This is

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28. Ibid., p.59.

followed by Charlemont's meeting with D'Amville. The latter counterfeits to take the former as a ghost. D'Amville, frightened by Charlemont's unexpected presence, cries, "O stay. Compose me. I dissolve." D'Amville tries to drag Charlemont away and fights with the latter. Sebastian again changes and defends his father but during this Sebastian receives fatal wounds. Before Charlemont could kill him the manipulated appearance of Montferrers' ghost again warns his son:

> Let him revenge my murder and thy wrongs
> To whom the justice of revenge belongs.[29]

When D'Amville finds no other circumstance to charge Charlemont,he arrests him on the charge for not paying back the sum of a "thousand crowns." At the same moment Sebastian receives a sum of a "thousand crowns" as compensation for the wounds he has received in the fight with Charlemont. After this Sebastian again changes and starts thinking of doing a favour to the virtuous, "I have a thousand crowns. Honesty tells me 't were well done to release Charlemont."

The following movement of the action opens with Charlemont's recounting the predicament of honest men

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29. Ibid., p.65.

surrounded by evil and not helped by God. But even in this extremely miserable state he does not lose faith in divine justice and blames human agents of evil nature for perpetrating tortures on the innocent. Charlemont now resolves to put up a resistance against the odds. However, he draws consolation from the realisation that there are people who are worse than him. Charlemont's long speech in this regard is in the nature of a choric commentary, not on any topical issue but on human predicament in general. While he is defending himself from falling into the trap of despair, Tourneur manipulates the entry of Sebastian which is both theatrically and dramatically significant. He comes as Charlemont's saviour from the present enemies. Sebastian offers Charlemont money that he has received from D'Amville in the form of compensation for his injuries. This offer is motivated by Sebastian's sense of gratitude at Charlemont's sparing him his life. But lest Charlemont should feel insulted at being offered help in his miserable condition Sebastian tells him a lie that the money he is offering has come from his father's benign inclination towards him. Sebastian's offer of a 'thousand crowns' for releasing Charlemont leads the latter to comment philosophically on the fruitful results of patience in contrast with selfish deeds:

I was a baron; that thy father has

compromise with Charlemont, [illegible]

assigns this task to Borachio. Once again the place for his

Depriv'd me of
Instead of that I am
Created king. I've lost a signory
That was confin'd within a piece of earth,
A wart upon the body of the world,
But now I am an emp'ror of a world,
This little world of man. My passions are
My subjects and I can command them laugh,
Whilst thou dost tickle 'em to death with misery.[30]

Impressed by this attitude of Charlemont, Sebastian releases him.

Contrast in attitudes of the virtuous with the vice becomes the main concern of the following movement. Castabella humbly requests D'Amville to release Charlemont but D'Amville is determined to torture her with her lover and neglects all her pitiably made supplications. This is ironical, too, because Charlemont is already released by Sebastian. When Charlemont appears with Sebastian before D'Amville he feels surprised and calls Sebastian a villain. Sebastian satirically replies, "you are my father." This further sets an opposition and a hurdle to D'Amville's smooth flow of his plot.

Now seeing the situation going out of his hands, D'Amville simulates sympathy for Charlemont:

I will execuse you
To lose a father and, as you may think,

30. Ibid., pp.69-70.

Be disinherited, it must be granted....
I will supply your father's vacant place.[31]

The third Act comes to an end with a seeming compromise between Charlemont and D'Amville, particularly *initiated by D'Amville who pretends to* Charlemont "the eternal bond of our (his) concluded love." Virtuous Charlemont again fails to understand the 'atheist,' D'Amville and embraces him. This shows that even the virtuous has to dissemble and take shelter under the powerful shade of evil.

In the forth Act the characteristic evil designs of both D'Amville and Levidulcia are further developed. Here the action of the sub-plot runs parallel to the action of the main-plot. However, at the very opening of the Act the sub-plot overtakes the main plot, and Soquette is seen with her professional needle-work which consists of various trees, their branches, leaves and flowers. Along with this needle-work presentation, lustful courting runs on among Sebastian, Soquette, Cataplasma, Languebeau, and Levidulcia. Though Languebeau is himself involved in the lustful deeds he comments on this course: "Purity be in this house." Levidulcia's sexual relations with Sebastian, Fresco, and Snuff hint at her most rotten personality.

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31. Ibid., p.72.

The needle-work of Cataplasma, symbolizes sexual love. 'The medlar', 'plum tree', 'savin tree', 'the gum issuing out of the perished joints', 'honey suckle', 'popering pear tree', 'wanton stream', which comprise the needle-work, are all symbols of sexuality. It is a commentary on Sebastian's and Levidulcia's wantonness. It also symbolizes D'Amville's barren posterity. Like a 'fruitful tree' D'Amville has two sons as its branches. But like the dead and rotten branches, D'Amville's sons are unable to continue their generation.

The action of the sub-plot is temporarily suspended to allow the main plot to progress. Contrary to the earlier compromise with Charlemont, D'Amville now seeks his life and assigns this task to Borachio. Once again the place for his murder is chosen, which is 'the sacred Churchyard'. D'Amville does not want to miss this golden opportunity for Charlemont's murder. His elder son is impotent, and the younger son is a man of humour. So D'Amville gathers courage to do the task himself:

> ...I hope I have a body
> That will not suffer me to lose my labour
> For want of issue yet. But then 't must be
> A bastard. Tush, they only father bastards
> That father other men's begettings. Daughter!
> Be it mine own, let it come whence it will.
> I am resolv'd.[32]

32. Ibid., p.80.

From the above speech it is clear that D'Amville is completely under the control of the beast in him. He does not fear or hesitate to violate the familial values and shamelessly wants to seduce Castabella.

D'Amville's corrupt nature is again contrasted with that of Charlemont which is amply evinced in the latter's meditation in the sacred Churchyard. During his meditation Borachio discharges fire on him, but luckily the pistol misfires and Charlemont is saved. In a defensive move Charlemont wounds Borachio and the latter dies. Besides murder, the sacred Churchyard is also chosen for the fulfilment of lust by the lustful partners. Languebeau and Soquette have fixed their meeting in the Churchyard nearly at the same place where, after killing Borachio, Charlemont hides himself. Before they could fulfil their desire, Charlemont frightens them away and again hides in the charnel house thinking, "It may be Heaven reserves me to some better end." Indeed he is reserved for some better end which will be seen a little later.

Resolved to continue his future generation D'Amville walks with Castabella in the Churchyard. He frankly discloses his business to Castabella:

'Tis true. By my
Persuasion thou wert forc'd to marry one

Unable to perform the office of
A husband. I was author of the wrong.
My conscience suffers under 't and I would
Disburden it by satisfaction....
I will supply that pleasure to thee which he cannot.[33]

Castabella's helplessness before the powerful evil is worth noticing here. She repeatedly urges heaven to save her honour, but it is of no avail. D'Amville denies the existence of any supernatural power and even challenges Castabella," Nay then invoke/ Your great suppos'd protector./ I'll do it."

At this juncture Tourneur manipulates the plot and deliberately brings in the divine intervention in the form of Charlemont who appears in disguise in the dress which Languebeau had left in confusion. He not only protects Castabella but also frightens D'Amville away.

Languebeau again enters the Churchyard pursuing his lustful partner Soquette. He catches sight of Borachio's dead body and mistakes it for Soquette's. But realizing the fact, he cries "Murder: Murder." D'Amville responds to the call. He looks upon a death's head and stares at it:

Why dost thou stare upon me? Thou art not

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33. Ibid., p.85.

The skull of him I murder'd. What hast thou
To do to vex my conscience.[34]

D'Amville's guilty nature is easily seen from the above speech. This is further perceived in the following speech:

... but now that I begin to feel
The loathsome horror of my sin and, like
A lecher empty'd of his lust, desire
To bury my face under my eyebrows and
Would steel from my shame unseen, she meets me
I' the face with all her light corrupted eyes
To challenge payment o' me.[35]

This pricking of the conscience is very soon quietened and D'Amville gathers courage to face whatever calamity comes in his way. But guilty conscience seems to continue to trouble him:

... O behold!
Younder's the ghost of old Montferrers in
A long white sheet, climbing yond' lofty mountain
To complain to Heav'n of me. Montferrers!
'Pox o' fearfulness. 'Tis nothing but
A fair white cloud. Why, was I born a coward?
He lies that says so.[36]

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34. Ibid., p.89.
35. Ibid., p.90.
36. Ibid.

This sense of guilty feeling is heavily burdened by Languebeau when he discovers Borachio's murdered body and cries for help. Languebeau's cries for D'Amville are like 'Mountains' and he again fears as if the "ghost of old Montferrers haunts me (him)." The effect of distraction continues to weigh on D'Amville's mind. Seeing Languebeau coming towards him D'Amville takes him to be: "Black Beelzebub/ And all his hellhounds come to apprehend me (him)." The conflict of passion and reason troubles D'Amville all the way since his opposition by Sebastian. Seeking after the possible murderer of Borachio, D'Amville approaches the sleeping Castabella and Charlemont. He charges them with Borachio's murder, and announces the doom of execution on both of them. Here unlike D'Amville, Charlemont confesses that he has killed Borachio, but not intentionally.

Towards the end of the fourth Act the sub-plot is once again taken up. Till now Levidulcia's sexual relations were not known to her husband, Belforest. But her long absence, at times, makes Belforest suspicious of Levidulcia's character. This is confirmed by Fresco, who himself is one of the lovers of Levidulcia. He reveals that Sebastian often serves Levidulcia's pleasure. Before Belforest could reach Levidulcia, she fearfully suspects the former's

presence. Here Sebastian, who himself is involved in the lustful activities, does not spare the corrupt women and satirizes their fickleness in an answer to Levidulcia's "how many mistresses ha' you 'i' faith?" Sebastian replies:

> In faith, none, for I think none of 'em are faithful, but otherwise as many as clean shirts. The love of a woman is like a mushroom; it grows in one night and will serve somewhat pleasingly next morning to breakfast, but afterwards waxes fulsome and unwholesome.[37]

Though the commentary is made on corrupt women, the irony is that it is one evil character commenting on the other evil one. Meanwhile Belforest approaches and catches Levidulcia with Sebastian in the lustful course. In the violent rage and unbearable passion Belforest kills Sebastian but in exchange himself receives the death wound. When the two wounded lovers are staggering for death, Levidulcia appears. She confesses her shameful deed, and feeling guilty at heart stabs herself. Before death she realizes:

> ...The sea wants water enough to wash away
> The foulness of my name. O, in their wounds
> I feel my honour wounded to the death.[38]

Levidulcia's confessional speech before death gives

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37. Ibid., p.97.

38. Ibid., p.99.

an impression that she has perhaps attained to some higher truth. Her death does not lead her to any higher perception, and remains the outcome of her shameful deed. The fourth Act ends with a choric commentary:

> O with what virtue lust should be withstood,
> Since 'tis a fire quench'd seldom without blood.[39]

The above comment reminds us of Cornelia's comments on lust and its consequences which she beheld in the lustful affairs between her daughter Vittoria and Brachiano:

> Earthquakes, leave behind lead, stone
> When they have tyrannized. But woe to ruin
> Violent lust leaves none.[40]

It is pertinent to recall here two things; first it is in the fitness of things that the pursuit of lust and murderous intentions are set in the dark, in a Churchyard; and secondly D'Amville's sexual advances towards Castabella make a climax of evil activities that violate all universal human values.

In the final Act all the loose ends of the different movements of the action are taken for conclusion. As we have already noticed, D'Amville's dream of his building up of

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39. Ibid., p.100.

40. Ibid.

a great plot, begins to crumble down. He is presented as a mad pursuer after wealth. In the very opening of the Act, D'Amville's idea of wealth as a supreme ruler of human life is presented through his handling of money which is collected as revenue after Montferrers' death. This is subtly commented upon by the watch who looks after it:

> D'Amville. Leave me my gold,
> Servant. And me my rest,
> Two things where with one man is seldom blest.[41]

The comment is made on the restless condition of greedy men such as D'Amville. D'Amville's blind faith in the power of wealth is stated in his following speech:

> These are the stars whose operations make
> The fortunes and the destinies of men....
> . . .These are the stars, the ministers of fate,
> And man's high wisdom, the superior power
> To which their forces are subordinate.[42]

Tourneur keeps the moral perspective of the audience by opposing to D'Amville's eulogy of the power of wealth, the pragmatism and harsh truth contained in the ghost's warning:

> D'Amville, with all thy wisdom th' art a fool,
> Not like those fools that we term innocents,
> But a most wretched miserable fool,

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41. Ibid., p.101.
42. Ibid., pp.101-102.

Which instantly, to the confusion of
Thy projects, with despair thou shalt behold.[43]

D'Amville does not feel thwarted by this precautionary warning, rather he gathers courage to defy it. But once again a reversal of situation takes place and D'Amville's over-confidence is brought down to dust when the dead body of his younger son is shown to him. Sebastian, as we know, was slain by Belforest in the previous Act. D'Amville faces shipwreck after shipwreck and now he hears the pathetic groaning of Rousard who is struggling for life. But he boldly faces this calamity and seeks the help of the doctors:

Doctor, behold two patients in whose cure
Thy skill may purchase an eternal fame.
. . .Now let thy practice and their sovereign use
Raise thee to wealth and honour.[44]

From now onwards D'Amville starts suspecting the favour of nature when he is repeatedly tortured by the groaning of Rousard. He foresees his ruin thus:

His gasping sighs are like the falling noise
Of some great building when the groundwork, breaks
On these two pillars stood the stately frame
And architecture of my lofty house.

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43. Ibid., p.102.
44. Ibid., p.104.

An earthquake shakes' em;
The foundation shrinks.[45]

D'Amville's hope of saving the life of Rousard fails him. The following extracts from D'Amville's last speeches throw ample light on the nature of the tragic perception that he attains to:

O there expires the date
Of my posterity. Can Nature be
So simple or malicious to destroy
The reputation of her proper memory?

Now to myself I am ridiculous.
Nature, thou art a traitor to my soul.
Thou hast abus'd my trust. I will complain
To a superior court to right my wrong....
... O the sense of death
Begins to trouble my distracted soul.[46]

D'Amville's seeming perception of some higher truth is worth noticing here. It is more an expression of his despair than of realising any higher truth which governs and controls human destiny in general. Like Marlowe's Tamburlaine he ends his long materialistic, self-aggrandising evil career with a sense of defeat and frustration.

Towards the end of the Act the conventional device of

45. Ibid., p.105.
46. Ibid., p.106.

purgation of the evil atmosphere is brought in. Cataplasma who has been working as poison to womanhood, is punished and deprived of her valuables, which she got through immoral means. Secondly Languebeau is sent back to his original profession of tellow-makers. Here Languebeau's revelation of how he became a hypocrite throws light on the corrupt Belforest, too.[47] The chief villainous piece of the drama, D'Amville, inspite of showing intermittent and sporadic qualm of conscience, continues to wade through evil. He tries to remove mercilessly all hurdles from the way of his avowed ambition to perpetuate his posterity through Machiavellian ways to fructify one's aspirations. The play ends with considerably truncated perceptions of any higher values by all characters. Charlemont, however, is singled out as a devotee of patience, as a virtue and a strong believer in the divine dispensation of justice. It is through his character that the dramatist introduces a moral conclusion in the play towards the end. Charlemont's self consoling in the following lines is a deliberate attempt at didacticism, a characteristic of tragical satire, and not a direct and convincing conclusion of the play worked out dramatically. The predominance of intrigues, coincidences theatrical horror and naked sexuality are too strong to make

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47. Ibid., p.109.

the didacticism artistically effective:

> Only to Heaven I attribute the work,
> Whose gracious motives made me still forbear
> To be mine own revenger.
> Now I see
> That patience is the honest man's revenge.[48]

48. Ibid., p.117.

CHAPTER-VI

C O N C L U S I O N

The foregoing discussion has amply evinced that the tragic plays written after Shakespeare were so different in dramaturgy and the emerging vision of life that they require a separate sub-category within the genre of tragedy. The other form of serious plays dealing with sufferings and threatening to be tragic, which was popularized by dramatists like Beaumont and Fletcher and labelled as tragi-comedies by critics, cannot be applied to the 'tragic' plays of Webster, Tourneur, Chapman, and Middleton. This is so because their vision of life and attitudes are different. The term tragical satire has been used for the 'tragic' plays of Webster and Tourneur not in the narrow sense in which the term has been used by Travis Bogard to analyse Webster's tragedies, The White Devil and The Duchess of Malfi. Bogard emphasizes the satiric elements and concludes that Webster's tragedies produce suffering not for emotive effect but for castigating certain contemporary social, moral, ethical, and political values and systems. What Bogard misses in Webster's plays is the dramatist's concern for an exploration of evil which does not allow freedom of choice to the suffering characters so that they could own responsibility to some extent for the choices that lead them

to act the way they have done. He also fails to see through the dramaturgical artistry of Webster where the suffering of the innocent does not create pathos and leaves the reader rather detached or equivocally wavering in his emotional response. Characters like Cariola, Antonio, the children of the Duchess, Marcello, and Cornelia suffer in a way where choice and responsibility are denied to them and no overriding supernatural or divine agencies are used to attenuate the harshness of the actors contributing to their sufferings. It is useful to recall what we have said earlier that the characteristic pattern of tragedy is what Fergusson has called 'purpose', 'passion', and 'perception', which means that the tragic sufferer makes a choice and takes a decision on which he later acts. This is 'purpose'. The choice leading to action entails suffering which is 'passion'. 'Passion' leads to 'perception' or realization of the suffering character's own mistakes and combined with this is his eventual realization of a higher truth or level of existence. In this regard we are not concerned with the innocent victims referred to above. But even those who make a choice and suffer are denied 'perception' and even their 'purpose' is not clear, because of which a number of critics have attacked for the vagueness of his characters' motives. Our analyses in the preceding chapters have tried to establish that Webster was not interested in creating an

Aristotelian tragic protagonist nor was he interested in creating Shakespeare-type tragic heroes. Even a Shakespearean Cordelia or Desdemona is responsible for her suffering. But such an explanation is hard to offer for the minor characters like Cariola or Cornelia. This is why where Shakespeare is able to manipulate successfully the feeling of artistic pathos, which should always be differentiated from weak sentimentalism, Webster refrains from indulging in such artistic subtleties. The contrast between the artistry of Shakespeare and that of Webster and Tourneur especially can be comprehended only if we grasp the dramatists' artistic intentions.

The essential difference between the Elizabethan dramatists like Shakespeare and the Jacobean dramatists like Webster and Tourneur lies in the nature of their exploration of evil. Shakespeare explored evil in the recesses of human mind and heart while Webster and Tourneur looked for it primarily in the society. Shakespeare's tragic characters suffer because of human issues while those of Webster and Tourneur suffer because of the milieu in which they live and by which they are guided and controlled. Chaos is created by Macbeth's everincreasing tyranny which results from his personal issues and the same can be said to be true of King Lear as well. But in Webster and Tourneur primacy is given to the milieu in which Vittorias, Franciscos, Isabellas and

Antonios are doomed to live and suffer. Whenever such a primacy becomes the main dramatic intention of a writer, satire becomes his chief concern. This is not to deny that depravity and crookedness of the humans has been completely ignored by Webster, Tourneur and other Jacobeans. Almost all the characters, except Charlemont and Castabella in The Atheist's Tragedy, and all the characters except Castiza, in The Revenger's Tragedy have depravity and rottenness of heart and mind. But these evils of human nature are so prompted, nourished, and guided by the various values obtaining in the society that the monstrous vision of the topsy-turvical, social, ethical, and political values engages the reader's attention more than the human issues. Revenge in Tourneur, for example, hinges firmly on considerations other than personal grudge because of emotional issues and is guided more by materialistic considerations of greed, power, lust, and the need for Machiavellianism to materialize such evil urges.

Similarly the atheism of D'Amville is not worked out dramatically to establish his philosophic stance but to expose the rottenness of his mind and heart covered in the garb of an ideational stand. Even the virtuous Duchess of Webster suffers not so much emotionally, but because of external forces, represented by the two pillars of the social institution, civil governance and spiritual or

religious administration symbolized respectively by Ferdinand and the Cardinal. A parallel situation, as we have shown in the analyses of the plays, is of revenge in The White Devil. In brief, what we propose to establish on the basis of our study of the four plays by Webster and Tourneur is that the world of tragical-satire pays greater attention to the milieu than to the individual. Fundamental issues of human existence are seldom raised or if raised perfunctorily, are not dramatically worked out. But the evils which are the controlling deity of the society are not treated in a way that any easy solution could be suggested for their elimination so that life becomes liveable inspite of the presence of evil and suffering. Evil is presented as destroying and self-destructive. We have shown earlier that all those who come in contact with evil, either voluntarily or involuntarily, are irretrievably caught in its quagmire. Even the virtuous cannot escape the contamination of evil. Not only this but they have to take the shelter of evil to guard themselves against its rapacious destructiveness. The Duchess's simulating, telling lies and planning a pilgrimage for security are the examples of how virtue can survive for sometime only under the protection of evil. The Duchess's surrender to Bosola's guidance is the most significant example of this aspect of the nature of evil explored by Webster. Of course the agency of one evil destroys that of

the other and thus it is self destructive. But the destruction of evil somehow does not bring in an affirmative vision of life as it happens in Shakespeare. The gloom which increasingly thickens in the plays we have analysed is not finally diffused. Both Webster and Tourneur do use the conventional device of restoring order over the chaos created during the course of the dramatic action. But the reader's mind does not feel relieved through catharsis and the gloom seems to persist. The conventional technique of ending their plays with trying to restore harmony and order does help the two dramatists to save their plays from dismal pessimism but a convincing affirmative view of life remains considerably truncated.

Another factor which leads us to look for a different nomenclature to the 'tragedies' of Webster and Tourneur is their handling of characters. Unlike what happens in a proper tragedy, characters in the worlds of the two dramatists do suffer but they do not attain proper 'perception'. Except for the Duchess in The Duchess of Malfi, all the characters before their death perceive only a misty vision and most of them remain tied down to the world of materialism and mundane existence. Cariola's desperate shrieking and piling up lies and simulation shows how frightened she is at the sight of death. Even the virtuous Antonio dies with a realization that unexpected accident has

sent his plan of reconciliation with the Cardinal awry. Ferdinand is visited by nemesis and hence is patently denied the status of tragic nature. The Cardinal's temporary feeling of the qualm of conscience is so insignificant and insubstantial that a few minutes after its expression it is completely forgotten by him as well as by the reader. Bosola's self-appointed role of an agent of divine justice and his moralising on the predicament of the human are at most suspect when opposed by his deeds and bent of mind. There is a deliberately built-in ambiguity in his wavering between the qualm of conscience and frustration at the denial of reward promised to him by the Arragonian brothers. As Webster has stated categorically in his preface to the play he has not introduced this wavering becasue of his carelessness or oversight but deliberately to underscore his artistic intentions. He seems to give an impression that Bosola's character changes because of his perception of a higher reality where he envisions humans fettered by fate and tossed like a tennis ball. But the principle of 'character is destiny' is not allowed to develop in accordance with a typical tragic structure. In The White Devil this ambiguity is the thinnest. Vittoria remains monolithically devilish and so are Flamineo and Bracciano. Only Lodovico shows some streaks of reasonableness in his revenge but these feeble streaks hardly offset his Machiavellian

machinations and brutal deeds. It is needless to emphasize that The White Devil is a more straightforward exploration of evil which does not admit of any admixture of complexity because of emotional or human issues as is the case with clearly categorized characters on the side of good and evil. Vendice's motive is understandable and his deeds are compatible with the reasonableness of his motive. But the destructive course that his motive initiates does not bring any qualm of conscience in his mind or any regret at the loss of lives. However, inspite of the reasonableness of Vendice's motives his strategies are characteristically evil. No character in the play seems to perceive a higher truth inspite of his suffering from which he learns nothing. Except for Charlemont and Castabella in The Atheist's Tragedy all the characters are the human manifestations of evil indulging in hypocrisy, simulation, and destruction. They are evil from the beginning and continue to be so until the end of their career. The dramatic pattern of the play does not expect anything better from them except that they live and die as evil. Though Charlemont and Castabella are virtuous and suffer both emotionally and physically, there is no newness in their eventual perception of a higher truth. The play ends with the moral, ethical, and emotional stands of these two characters with which it began.

The singular feature of all the plays we have

analysed is that our empathy does not flow involuntarily to any of the character except the Duchess in some selected situations. This is patently not in keeping with the emotional effect of a proper tragedy. It, however, remains the hall-mark of a tragical-satire.

The advantage of a narrative artist is that he can offer his comments and interpretations directly. In modern drama this has to a great extent been achieved through detailed stage directions. In absence of interpretive stage directions Webster has introduced satiric commentators who perform the role of an omniscient observer in specific situations in the manner of the Greek chorus. Antonio's commentary on the French court vis-a-vis the courts in Italy in the opening situation of The Duchess of Malfi and Antonelli's and Gasparo's opening commentary on the state of affairs in their country and on the extravagance of Lodovico in the opening situation of The White Devil, are such examples. Vendice's opening revelation of his motives and D'Amville's similar exposition in The Revenger's Tragedy and The Atheist's Tragedy respectively are examples of the novel technique of dramatic exposition. The point can be clarified by contrasting Shakespeare's technique in the opening situations of his tragedies like King Lear, Hamlet, and Macbeth, where the drama of the plays begins as soon as the first character appears on the stage. We are invited to

respond to the gradual unfolding and development of the action without the help of authorial commentary or choric guidance. Thus the inclusion of the commentator becomes a staple of the technique of a tragical satire. But both Webster and Tourneur have extended the dramatic function of the satiric commentators in their 'tragedies'. These commentators sometimes are detached and non-participating in the action in order to bring in objectivity in their commentary. But such a role is not sustained for a long time and the commentator imperceptively merges with the dramatic personae that he represents. We have pointed out this aspect during the course of our analyses and propose only to add here that such a technique of the alternating or sometimes subtly simultaneous operations of the two functions of detachment from and participation in the action leads to textural complexity of a play. This conduces precision and economy of presentation as well as enables the clarifying of the moral perspective of the reader in regard to a situation or the attitude and value espoused by a character. It is this technique which clarifies the confusions regarding characters, like Bosola, who as Antonio says, is essentially virtuous, and scholarly and , as we see later in the play, capable of conscientious response to human values but who pursues, almost singlemindedly, destructive deeds and expresses cynical attitudes. Such a technique is also

useful where simulation, hypocrisy, conspiracy, and betrayal are the corner stones of human relationship.

Since the focus of dramatic attention is the milieu and not the individual, both Webster and Tourneur found the conventional technique of tragedy inadequate for their plays. Broadly speaking the plotlines of the plays we have analysed follow the linear pattern though, as we have pointed out earlier, the persistence of gloom towards the end of the play hints at the human's inability and helplessness in the total eradication of evil either in the milieu or in the individuals. This is because in these plays we do not have explicit confrontation between good and evil, nor are these categorically polarized as we find in Shakespeare's tragedies. The evil sometimes may show feeble freaks of goodness and good can increasingly be drawn towards evil for shelter and survival. When there is a conflict between two opposing values, inspite of the lack of poetic justice, the values which are universally upheld do assert themselves to ensure revitalization of life out of the debris that a particular tragic world of drama presents. In such a situation the linear structure of the play begins with exposition and develops through complication to catastrophe and eventual denouement where 'calm of mind, all passion spent' becomes the conclusion of the play. Finally a sense of harmony promising continuity, revitalization of life, and

hope based on universal values are established. Hence any skepticism of a possible circularity of the plotline does not arise. But in the case of Webster and Tourneur, after the dramatists have achieved their satiric purpose of exploring evil in its naked form and manifested in a varied manner, they are unable to induce the effect of harmony, reconciliation, and a hopeful conclusion with any sense of finality.

Besides the broad structure of a tragical satire pointed out above, which Webster and Tourneur exploited to establish the positive and formidable reality of evil in the macrocosm, they tapped the resources of other dramatic conventions, pointed out during the analyses of the plays. Some of these are the use of pageants, masque, and dumbshow. Normally these conventions are used to dilute sensationalism, but Webster and Tourneur have introduced sensationalism in the form of terrifying events taking place on the stage. Scenes of murder, torture, frightening appearances, and horrifying shrieks are scattered all over the four plays we have analysed. Such scenes besides aiming at the theatricality of the play contribute to the presentation of the manifestations of evil in inhuman and horrifying shapes. The sensationalism of the Jacobean drama has been attacked by a number of critics. Without proposing to defend it, we can say that this substantially contributes to the

presentation of evil in palpable and concretised form and thus serves a useful dramatic function for both Webster and Tourneur.

As far as the style of tragical satire is concerned, it is differentiated from that of a proper tragedy by its directness, lack of lyricism and rhetoric, staccato utterances, witty remark, more conversational rhythm of the blank verse, starkly objective and transperant imagery, and a pronounced lack of humour. For example, we do not find any situation in the play we have analysed where sympathetic and indulgent humour is used to relieve a dramatic situation from its depressing effects. We do have a single situation of humorous import in The Duchess of Malfi where Cariola cuts jokes with the Duchess and in collaboration with Antonio tries to play practical jokes upon the Duchess by leaving her alone talking to herself in Act III, Sc.ii. But even this situation is aimed at intensifying the horrendous encounter of the Duchess with her devilish brother. Wit and quick repartee, likewise, are used only to accentuate bitterness and cynicism of a certain dialogic situation. Bosola's conversation with the Duchess before her strangulation in Act IV, Sc.ii., is a significant example in this respect. Similar examples have been pointed out during the analyses of the plays in the preceding chapters. The use of imagery by Webster and Tourneur has significant dramatic

function of protraying all- pervasive evil in the dramatic worlds. Majority of the images are drawn from low life, poison, beasts, insects, physical nature, birds, and murder and destruction. These images are not for stylistic elaboration or embellishment. On the one hand they give us an inkling into the characters using them and into those for whom they are used, while on the other hand they contribute to the building up or intensifying of the pervasive nature of evil. It will be cumbersome and unnecessarily repetitive to cite all such examples which we have pointed out earlier during the analyses of the plays. Thus all the dramaturgical components of the four plays we have analysed are geared to the presentation of the rottenness of the society in which tragedy is primarily man-made or is a result of the institution controlling human existence.

We find the same dramaturgical pattern operating in the other 'tragic' plays of Chapman, Middleton, Marston, and Ford. The 'tragic' plays of the Jacobean period have a distinctive flavour and employ characteristically distinctive dramatic strategies which entitle them to claim a different nomenclature from that of a proper tragedy. Perhaps further investigation is desirable to establish the claims of all the Jacobean 'tragedies', besides the ones we have analysed, to be renamed as 'tragical satires'.

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